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*The Cross of Peace*

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A novel by

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Philip Gibbs



# *The Cross of Peace*

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### AUTHOR'S NOTE

*All the characters in this book are imaginary, and the events I have described as happening in Avignon have no basis of fact in regard to that city.*

*I was in the Ruhr during the French occupation, but I am indebted to my friend Mr. G. E. R. Gedye for one or two points of fact in his book "The Revolver Republic".*

A. FO

*PART I*









# I

ARMAND GATIÈRES, Captain of Chasseurs Alpins, was undoubtedly a very brave man, though in private conversation sometimes when younger men tempted him to describe his experiences of war—which he shirked—he laid most stress on the times when he had been frightened. He was able to do so without any loss of reputation because of the record visible on his tunic, commanding respect even from German civilians who glanced coldly, now and then, at this French officer belonging to the Army of Occupation on the Rhine.

He wore the Croix de Guerre, with palms, the Légion d'Honneur—which he had received with a kiss on both cheeks from General Gouraud—and the English Military Cross conferred upon him after the second battle of the Marne.

"Tell me, *mon capitaine*," said a young officer who had joined the battalion after the Armistice—he came from St. Paul in the Alpes Maritimes—"what is that story about a marble Venus? Sergeant Michel, that 'type' from Montmartre, was saying something about it yesterday. It is his best memory of the war, he says."

Captain Gatières shrugged his shoulders and smiled faintly.

"Sergeant Michel is a *blagueur*. He talks too much. I shall have to dress him down."

The two French officers were sitting over coffee and cigarettes in the dining-room of the Fürstenhof in Mainz.

It was crowded with officers of the French, British, and American Armies. They were being served by German waiters who less than a year ago had been German soldiers lying behind machine-guns or bringing field-batteries into action against troops commanded by their present customers, whom, it seemed, they no longer desired to kill. Armand Gatières and the young lieutenant had a window-seat. From their table they could see the German civilians passing: young girls neatly dressed, arm in arm; middle-aged business men in pre-war clothes which hung loosely on their bodies as though they had shrunk from their former size, especially round the waist; tall young men—obviously ex-officers—walking at a quick pace and busy with secret thoughts which did not make them cheerful. Not one of them, as Captain Gatières noticed, glanced for even a second at a battalion of French infantry marching in the roadway to the tap of drums. It seemed as though the Germans refused to notice, by so much as the flicker of an eyelid, the presence of this Army of Occupation which was the outward and visible sign of Germany's defeat and downfall. Captain Gatières had remarked that many times in Mainz. It was as though they were invisible. The Germans looked over them, past them, and through them. Never once did he actually see any sign of awareness. It was a conspiracy of mental blindness.

"Tell me, *mon capitaine*," said the young lieutenant again, "what happened in the château of Vermelles that time you laid about you with a marble Venus? The Germans were in an upper room, weren't they? Your men broke down the ceiling and bayoneted them as they fell through. Sergeant Michel says he bit off a German's ear. He says you laid them out like ninepins."

Captain Gatières shrugged his shoulders again, with another faint smile beneath his little brown moustache.

"I can't remember a thing about it. It was early in the war. I only remember that I was elaborately frightened.

But why remind me of those horrors? Blood and stench and filth! How pleasant it is to sit in this nice room with a white tablecloth under one's elbows!"

The younger officer—Philippe du Retail—laughed over his cigarette.

"You do not satisfy my curiosity! I was a schoolboy when you were already a hero. I feel as though I had missed the greatest experience in life."

Armand Gatières, a man of twenty-six or so to this boy's twenty, glanced at him with a sombre amusement.

"My dear child, you missed the greatest experience of death. It is not amusing, after all, to see men blown to bits . . . to see men blinded and disembowelled—to walk over their dead bodies—to sit in the stench of their corruption—one's friends, charming fellows with whom one has talked about life and art and beauty; and those simple men whom one came to love before they were mowed down by machine-gun fire. I had four years of it before I was taken prisoner. I assure you that I thought a German prison camp was next door to paradise."

"How did you get taken?" asked young Philippe du Retail, who had seen no war.

Captain Gatières obliged with this reminiscence, reluctantly.

"A dull story! Most of my men had been knocked out. I had a machine-gun bullet in the left leg and waited for the end, because of that infernal shell-fire. Quite unpleasant, you know! Then the shelling stopped and there was a bit of a counter-attack, I suppose. Anyhow, I saw some Germans, and especially one German who had his bayonet ready to stick me through the guts. I saw his eyes and knew that he was going to kill me. There was nothing I could do about it. I had lost my revolver in the mud. Anyhow, I was paralysed with fear."

Philippe du Retail smiled. This confession of fear by an officer who wore the Croix de Guerre and the Légion

d'Honneur and the English Military Cross gave him a tremendous thrill.

"What kind of thoughts came to you at that moment?" he asked. "It is perhaps an experience that I shall never have."

The French captain crumbled a bit of bread on the tablecloth and seemed interested in the crumbs.

"I rather think I sent a kind of message to a lady in Avignon—my mother, as a matter of fact. It was like the wail of a boy in distress. She said she heard it that evening in Avignon, at five-thirty. An odd coincidence!"

"And that *sale Boche* didn't stick you?"

Captain Gatières smiled.

"He was disappointed of his prey. A *Feldwebel* kicked his bayonet up and told him to go to hell, or words to that effect. He was good enough to take me prisoner, and I must say I was very much obliged to him."

"It was a near squeak, *mon capitaine*," said Philippe du Retail. "Felicitations!"

He looked out of the window to watch the German people passing, and then laughed.

"They are a disgusting people, these Germans! It was perhaps a mistake that God created them."

Armand Gatières gave his faint ironic smile.

"You are too critical of God, *mon lieutenant*!"

## II

This French officer, Armand Gatières, was perhaps not entirely typical of men of his age and class who entered the zone of occupation after the Armistice, yet I should be glad to think that there were many like him, and, indeed, do think so. He belonged to a good old family in Avignon, not of the noble class but of honest bourgeois stock. His father, who had died before the war, had been a doctor and was a man of liberal thought and charming character, very

popular with his patients because his wit and his good nature did them more good than his medicine. His mother—unlike her husband—was a practising Catholic, and it was no doubt from her that Armand inherited a sensibility which made him suffer a good deal as an adolescent boy among lads of tougher fibre in school and college. From his mother certainly he learnt a love of French poetry and a critical sense of beauty, and—perhaps more valuable—a belief in spiritual values, even though later, and often in the war, he was touched by a scepticism which he expressed with irony and something of his father's wit.

In all that—his home life, the background of his character, his code of manners—he was typical of the intelligence and tradition of the French middle-class at its best. Yet there must have been some strain in him, inherited or accidental, which made him different in some ways from his fellow officers.

He was aware of that during the war. In long talks he had with his comrades in dug-outs and trenches and billets and shell-holes, he was conscious of suffering from a kind of moral and spiritual despair which did not seem to touch them in the same degree. They too despaired because the war lasted so long, because they were afraid of death—being so keen for life—because they yearned for their women-folk, because the enemy never seemed to weaken, because France was being bled to death ; but they did not despair, as he did, because the war seemed to him a denial of human reason, or at least a frightful challenge to a belief in the progress of civilized ideals. They accused him of being a sentimentalist when he said that chivalry had been abandoned in modern warfare and that they had returned to the ape stage on both sides. They chaffed him sometimes, before even chaff was killed by the long endurance of endless slaughter, for his polite behaviour to German prisoners who surrendered to his company on the Somme.

"My dear Gatières," said a brother officer, afterwards



killed on the Marne, "you speak to those German swine as though they were gentlemen!"

"It is a question of good manners," he answered. "It is, no doubt, personal conceit. I am afraid of being a cad."

They might have suspected him of being a bit of a milksop if he hadn't been such a fine soldier. There was that story about the château of Vermelles. He had rushed it with his company under the sweep of machine-gun fire. He had used a marble Venus, handy on its pedestal, to crack the skulls of the "Boches" who came tumbling down from the upper floor when the ceiling fell in. His brother officers only laughed at him when he said afterwards that he was mad with fear all the time. That was true, of course, but he had reacted to fear in the right way, they thought. Some men reacted in the wrong way, and that made all the difference between a man who won the Croix de Guerre and another who was shot for cowardice. They quite agreed that the dividing line was very thin—sometimes no more than a snapped nerve. Still, this fellow, Armand Gatières—his type of face reminded them of D'Artagnan—had some fine quality in him which saved him from that last disgrace of showing fear when he was frightened. A question of glands, perhaps, the luck of inherited physique, or some spiritual pride.

His men adored him, because he never worried them with small severities and was friendly and humorous, and considerate of their comfort. There was Sergeant Michel, for instance, a blasphemous fellow from Montmartre—though born in Antibes—who had been with Captain Gatières from the beginning. He had a doglike devotion to this officer who had once released him from the police in Amiens when this sergeant of Chasseurs was very drunk. He once nearly killed a man for calling Captain Gatières a foul name. It did not break the reputation of an officer who had a name for valour when he broke down one day because a boy from Avignon, his brother, straight from the Lycée,

had been killed in the trenches at Frise-sur-Somme an hour after his arrival at the front. There were other times when Lieutenant Gatières, afterwards captain, broke down in the presence of Sergeant Michel who reported casualties. That was when his nerves were not too good after heavy shell-fire. Some men were taken like that. It was nothing up against them if they pulled themselves together again. Armand Gatières had always pulled himself together sufficiently to lead his men and make them believe that he didn't care a damn for his own life and was only worried about theirs. Perhaps that was true. It was the truth as it appeared to his battalion. Some of them—the survivors of war—were very pleased when their former captain returned from a prison camp in Germany to be attached to the general staff on the Rhine. It was Sergeant Michel—once an *apache* in Paris—who had tears in his eyes when Captain Gatières embraced him before the whole company and kissed him on both cheeks as though he had been his long-lost brother. After all, they had been in some tough places together. It was a miracle that they were both alive.

"How are all those girls you love?" asked Captain Gatières of his friend the sergeant. "Suzanne and Marthe and Marie Clare?"

"*Mon capitaine*," said Sergeant Michel, "those little sluts have all betrayed me. That is natural! It is the way of women. But there are others called Jeanne and Odette and Lucille. They are not too bad."

"You do not change your character, even after the Armistice?" asked Captain Gatières.

"*Mon capitaine*," said Sergeant Michel; "this Armistice is only a time of respite before another war. The Germans are always Germans. They will want their revenge. We are insisting upon their wanting it. In my opinion, speaking as a soldier and not as a politician, we should either destroy the whole German race or make things easy for the poor swine who want to get to work again. But then, as you know, *mon*

*capitaine*, before the war I was a follower of Jaurès, and a good Socialist. I believe in the brotherhood of man, although I have killed many Germans and once bit off a German's ear in order to liberate my throat from the strangle-grasp of a *Feldwebel* who greatly desired to kill me. It was, as you remember, in the château of Vermelles."

"Let us forget all those horrors," suggested Captain Gatières. "The war is over, *mon vieux*."

It was after the Armistice and during the occupation of the French positions on the Rhine that this officer reacted differently from his comrades to the civilian population of ex-enemies. Many of them, especially the younger officers who had not been through the worst phases of the war, were determined to humiliate these Rhinelanders and give them a taste of the severities and arrogance which French people had suffered behind the lines in German occupation. It was natural. It was justice, they thought. They remembered the brutalities of the German command in Lille and other cities, when the civilian population had endured for four years the humiliation of obedience to German orders—not to be out on the streets after dusk, fined and imprisoned for the slightest offence against military discipline, obliged to salute the officers of an army which had laid waste to northern France and committed abominable acts. Very well, then! Now it was the turn of *la France victorieuse*. They would teach these "*sales Boches*" the necessity of obedience and respect.

The Germans did not like the order that all civilians were required to yield the pavement and doff their hats to French officers. They refused to notice the presence of French officers. *Très bien!* They would be obliged to take notice by having their hats knocked off by the butt end of a riding-whip, and if they objected to that they would get a good thrashing as well.

Captain Gatières did not take that view. He annoyed his colonel by arguing that the order was unreasonable and



that the only way of obedience for the Germans would be to go hatless, in view of the constant passing of French officers.

"*Pourquoi pas ?*" asked Colonel de la Prade.

He suggested that it was better than having their heads knocked off—a method which he, personally, would have preferred.

Armand Gatières avoided the eyes of the German civilians as much as possible in order not to demand a salute. He was embarrassed by having to assume an arrogance which he did not feel. He was annoyed—he was indeed very angry—one morning with young Philippe du Retail, when he came across that young officer thrashing a German unmercifully, although the man stood passive and unresisting. Captain Gatières caught hold of the upraised arm of his lieutenant which was ready to slash the man again.

"*Tiens, mon vieux, qu'est-ce-que tu fais ? Ce n'est pas raisonnable, ça !*"

"This brute refused to salute me," explained Philippe du Retail. "He looked me straight in the eyes and passed on. I'm teaching him to obey orders."

The German, a man of about thirty-five, said something in his own tongue which Armand Gatières understood, as a student of that language during his time as a war prisoner. He heard the word "*verblindet*", and it turned him cold with a kind of sickness and pity, so that he swung round to the lieutenant and spoke indignantly.

"The man is blind. Haven't you any eyes in your own head? This is a brutality, *mon lieutenant*. This poor man is a victim of your senselessness."

Young Philippe du Retail was disconcerted. He was hurt by this severe reprimand from a man for whom he had a special hero-worship. He coloured vividly and stammered some words of regret.

"I had no idea! I was perhaps too hasty. I did not notice his blindness."

A little crowd had gathered in this side-street of Mainz.

The blind German stood wiping a streak of blood from his cheek which had been slashed by a French riding-whip. There were sullen looks and hostile words, one of which was audible to the ears of Captain Gatières.

*"Schweinehund !"*

Captain Gatières spoke a few words of German to the beaten man. He explained that his friend had not noticed his blindness.

*"Ich bedaure es vielmal. Verzeihung !"*

The blind man was perhaps astonished at this apology from a French officer. He answered in a low voice :

*"Es macht nichts !"*

It did not matter, he said. Perhaps nothing mattered now that he was blind.

That incident was only one occasion upon which Armand Gatières felt out of sympathy with the behaviour and temper of other French officers and the general policy of the French High Command in this zone of occupied territory. At mess, sometimes, he sat silent when the General and his own colonel and some of the staff officers narrated incidents of the day when they had "strafed" the Boche for disobedience to orders and other offences against their regulations. They described gaily and with a wealth of caricature the appearance of fat burghers and German housewives arrested and brought before the court on charges of insulting a member of the Army of Occupation. These people were stupefied when they were heavily fined or sent off to prison. One bald-headed Boche had had the cheek—*le culot*—to plead that he was the father of a family of eight children who would starve if he were sent to prison.

The General laughed heartily at this anecdote.

"These Boches breed like rabbits. It's disgusting. It is fortunate that the Allied blockade has helped to lower the population of a race who will always be our enemies."

Armand Gatières remained silent, not joining in this conversation. He didn't agree with those views. He had a

passion for children and he hated to think that these little straw-haired Germans whom he saw about the streets should be kept hungry and weak until the Peace Treaty had been settled and signed. A French doctor he knew—a genial fellow who reminded him of his own father—had told him that many of the children were rickety from lack of proper diet, and that young German girls fainted at their work because they were eating filthy *ersatz* food which did not contain the right amount of vitamins. That didn't seem fair somehow. Those girls and children weren't responsible for the war. Masses of these rickety babes had been born after its beginning and they were still being kept hungry or under-fed because the statesmen in Paris—the English Lloyd George, the American President, and old Clemenceau—couldn't agree on the terms of peace to be imposed on a defeated nation. Where was the chivalry of which France had once been so proud?

"Perhaps I'm a sentimentalist," confessed Armand Gatières, uneasy because he could not see things with the mind of his friends. "Perhaps I do not remember quite enough the sufferings inflicted on France. Perhaps these officers—that old General—are expressing the will of God or the workings of human destiny. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children unto the third and fourth generation.' Does it go like that? But that seems to me unfair. I can't see any justice or mercy in frightful words like that. If it is the law of life, perhaps it is a pity that life exists. Perhaps man is one of God's mistakes. Perhaps, on the other hand, there is no God, and we are merely an accident in a senseless charivari of atoms and elements."

He listened to the General at the head of the table, a distinguished old man with white moustaches which he twisted continually with a nervous gesture.

"It is of course those absurd English—well, I do not profess to understand them—who have interfered with our legitimate claim to the left bank of the Rhine. I hear from my brother in Paris that this sacred Lloyd George is obstructing

Foch on that point at every turn, and that old Clemenceau has weakened to the English point of view—which is supported by that pedagogue Wilson with his visionary ideals of human brotherhood and all that ghastly nonsense !”

“There is an alternative, *mon Général*,” said Colonel de la Prade. “I am much in favour of it.”

“Explain. What alternative? We have the left bank or we do not have it !”

Colonel de la Prade smiled at this dogmatic utterance. It was characteristic of a General who had refused to believe that the German wire was uncut before some trench lines on the Somme.

“My artillery has destroyed the wire. You will attack at dawn. There is no wire to hold up your men.”

They had been held up on the wire while the German machine-gun fire had slashed them to death.

“*Mon Général*, the Rhinelanders have no love for Prussia. They are of different blood and spirit. I am credibly informed that there is a movement to establish an autonomous state. There is a German fellow, named Dr. Dorten, who is leading a Separatist movement which it should be our policy to support. French influence could create a buffer state between France and Germany. We should not have the left bank of the Rhine geographically, but we should have it as a sphere of influence. The idea appeals to me—*faute de mieux* !”

“It’s the first I’ve heard of it,” said the General. “Not uninteresting.”

Armand Gatières was in Mainz when the Peace Treaty was signed at Versailles. He read its terms with a sense of foreboding. It seemed to him to put humiliations and obligations upon the German people which were beyond human endurance. It seemed to him in the old spirit of *Vae Victis* !—whereas he had hoped, vaguely, in a way which he had not formulated to himself, that this peace would lead to some new order in Europe, to some closer union of

democratic peoples for the preservation of liberty and European culture—at least to some security of peace so that France would not have to send the last of her young manhood into the same furnace fires. But here, surely, he argued, was the blue print of another war when these German people should gather their strength and spirit again. They were being asked to pay a tribute which was surely beyond the power of any nation. They had that Polish Corridor driven as a wedge between their people. It was all very dangerous, he thought, and then wondered why he should think these things; a simple Captain of Chasseurs, ignorant of statesmanship, a lover of France, aware of all the agony which France had suffered at the hands of the enemy, a man who bore their marks on his body—that wound in the right leg which would make him limp to the end of his life. Who was he to set up his ideas against men like Foch and Clemenceau? They ought to know. Foch, at least, was not vindictive. He had a simple nobility of mind, unless men who had served under him were utterly deceived.

To the German people this Treaty of Peace was like a sentence of doom when they read its terms. He could see that in their faces about the streets of Mainz. For the first time since the Armistice they showed a visible despair—a kind of stupor. At first the cessation of war—the end to the blood bath—had come as a relief to them. Even the entry of foreign troops into the Rhineland had not been so desperate a humiliation, because they were a security against the anarchy which had preceded them. They had believed, to the end, that President Wilson would make a peace generous to a nation which had overthrown its old rulers and had declared itself a Republic. Now, faced with this Peace Treaty, they were stupefied as though by a knock-out blow.

One of the French interpreters—Lieutenant Meyer—spoke to Armand Gatières. He was an officer who knew German perfectly and the feeling of the people in the occupied territory.



"It's like poison to them, that Peace Treaty. What they resent most bitterly of all is their forced acknowledgment of war guilt."

Armand Gatières raised his eyebrows.

"Were they not guilty? . . . The invasion of Belgium? . . ."

Lieutenant Meyer, who was of Jewish origin, smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have never met a German who believes that his country was responsible for what has happened. They believe they were ringed round with enemies. They say that Russia mobilized first—which, of course, is true. They have a theory that Poincaré and Isvolsky plotted this war."

Armand Gatières laughed incredulously.

"If they believe that, they can believe anything."

Lieutenant Meyer smiled, but looked thoughtful.

"There is another thing they believe, equally incredible. They believe that the German Armies were undefeated in the field and that their collapse was due to starvation behind the lines and the infection of Communism. It is a pity, perhaps, that we didn't march to Berlin."

Captain Gatières did not agree.

"It would have cost many thousands of lives," he said sharply. "It was unnecessary. Surely there was no need of further bloodshed after their surrender? I think of all those boys in the last reserves. In any case the Germans were beaten. To think otherwise is an illusion, and the Germans, after all, are realists, are they not?"

Lieutenant Meyer shook his head and fingered his jaw with thin, transparent fingers which once had played the violin in the concert halls of Paris.

"You are mistaken in thinking they are realists, *mon capitaine*! They are dreamers and ideologues. I happen to know them. They have an infinite capacity for believing what sentiment dictates against the cold light of reason. They have a deep strain of mysticism which leads them into a Wagnerian dream-world."

He launched into an analysis of German character until interrupted by Armand Gatières, a trifle abruptly.

"Let us have a game of billiards. It is an excellent game because it prevents one from thinking too much."

The Jewish officer agreed with a laugh.

"That reminds me of the war—when thought was the worst infirmity of the mind. If one thought one went mad. It was essential not to think. Some of our generals were very successful in avoiding that danger ! A cigarette, *mon capitaine* ?"

### III

The Army of Occupation on the Rhine lived in unaccustomed luxury, marvellous to men who had had experience of trenches and billets in the war zone. The best apartments, houses, and mansions in Mainz had been requisitioned for headquarters, civil administration offices, and military staffs. However hostile French officers and men might be to the German people, they acknowledged that these "Boches" knew how to make good homes for themselves, and had a passion for cleanliness and order. They also had fine hotels, restaurants, and beer halls, of which the French army was pleased to take possession.

On the return of Captain Gatières to his military duties after being a prisoner of war for some months, he was fortunate in being billeted in a fine old house with a view of the cathedral from his bedroom window.

It was Lieutenant Meyer who had arranged this matter for his friend.

"I think you will be comfortable," he said. "Colonel de la Prade had his eye on the place, because it is only a stone's-throw from his office, but I've pushed him off to a house rather more imposing and furnished in the most atrocious taste, which he thinks magnificent. I remembered your artistic sensibilities, *mon capitaine* !"

"Very nice of you," said Gatières, with a laugh. "Still,

a good bed is really all I need. I hope I shan't be inconveniencing the owners of the house. It must be very annoying for any German to have a French officer thrust on them like this."

Lieutenant Meyer was amused by this point of view. He had never heard it expressed before by any of the officers for whom he had found billets.

"No need to worry about that. If they make any trouble you have only to report the matter. As a matter of fact, they are rather good people. The house belongs to Heinrich von Menzel and his wife—one of the old Rhineland families. They speak French quite well and are perfectly civilized."

"Good," said Gatières. "Any family?"

Lieutenant Meyer explained that they had a boy and girl, according to his information. One of the officers previously billeted in the house said that the girl had been sent out of the occupied zone to relatives in Berlin, probably to save her from the amorous propensities of French officers. Meyer had seen the son for a moment—a good-looking lad of nineteen or so—just young enough to have escaped military service. Otto, by name.

It was Otto von Menzel, this son of the house, who showed Captain Gatières his new quarters. Upon knocking at the door for the first time, Gatières was shown by a shy *Mädchen* into the study of the boy's father, where he found Herr von Menzel standing with his back to the stove—an old-fashioned affair of tiled porcelain—obviously awaiting the new officer who was to be billeted in his house. He was a tall, grey-haired man of about fifty, rather handsome, with strong, clear-cut features which were not typically German and might, indeed, have been English, or even French. He was well-dressed in dark clothes and had a certain elegance, although his suit was easy and informal, and rather bagged at the knees from sitting at his desk in this room, which was surrounded with bookcases—and books—except where spaces had been left for portraits of some eighteenth century ancestors.



In an armchair by the window was sitting a lady whom Captain Gatières guessed rightly to be Frau von Menzel; younger, he thought, than her husband, and not without beauty. She had fair hair touched with grey and her complexion was still fresh, with a glow of delicate colour. At his entrance she rose and stood close to her husband, with a hand on his left arm.

Captain Gatières was slightly embarrassed. It was, he thought, an awkward situation.

He saluted courteously, and introduced himself.

"Captain Armand Gatières. . . . I have the honour to be billeted here. I hope you will excuse this intrusion."

Herr von Menzel gave him a quick, searching look, not exactly hostile, but ironic and challenging. He spoke in excellent French.

"It is, of course, an intrusion—we cannot pretend otherwise—but we are under orders from our French masters, and we have a certain tradition of dignity and good manners. We shall endeavour to make you comfortable, Captain Gatières, as an uninvited guest—but still, a guest."

Captain Gatières bowed slightly, and felt more embarrassed.

"I shall give the least possible trouble," he murmured.

Herr von Menzel took his wife's hand, which rested on his arm.

"My dear," he said, still speaking in French, "permit me to present Captain Gatières of the French Army, who will be under our roof for some time."

Frau von Menzel nodded slightly in answer to the officer's bow. She also spoke excellent French. • • •

"It would be insincere to say you are welcome, monsieur. We do not appreciate the presence of the French Army in the Rhineland—especially the outrage of your black troops—but, as my husband says, we hope to behave with dignity and resignation."

Captain Gatières was more than ever embarrassed. That

speech was cutting in its bitterness. That reference to black troops was like the slash of a whip, so that he felt the blood rush to his face. He did not approve of the presence of those black soldiers in the occupied zone. He, too, had called it an outrage, in argument with Colonel de la Prade, who had been very angry with him.

Even Herr von Menzel was rather disconcerted by his wife's speech. He laughed slightly, turning to Gatières with more friendliness.

"It is too soon to begin controversial argument! There will be plenty of time for that, if you will favour us with your company now and then. We have our German point of view, of course, but I hope that will not make discussion impossible on either side. We do not wish to make individual French officers responsible for any grievance we may have against French policy and oppression. Naturally we have those grievances!"

He laughed again, uneasily but courteously.

It was a fair speech. Captain Gatières could not quarrel with its expression. He murmured his thanks.

"*Merci, mille fois, monsieur!*"

At that moment the door opened, and a young man entered. It was obviously Otto von Menzel, the son of the house. Gatières was presented to him, and he shook hands without any sign of hostility. He was a tall lad, with very fair hair like his mother's, and strikingly good-looking, with his father's features, more finely cut because of his youth. Gatières noticed that he was carelessly dressed in a pair of shorts above rough stockings and a white shirt open at the neck. His father made a remark about this costume, of which he seemed to disapprove.

"Otto, my dear lad, why didn't you put on a decent suit? I suggest something in the nature of a collar and tie."

He spoke those words in German, which Gatières understood.

The boy shrugged his shoulders and smiled, answering in his own language.

"Why should I? I believe in simplicity—and comfort."

"Perhaps you will show this gentleman to his rooms, Otto," said Frau von Menzel.

"With pleasure, my dear Mother," said the boy charmingly.

He turned to Gatières and spoke in French.

"Come and see your new rooms, sir."

Captain Gatières bowed to the boy's father and mother and followed his guide up a broad staircase with old banisters and wooden stairs, so highly polished that there was a danger of slipping on them. On the walls were some more of those old portraits of German notabilities of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On the first landing a stained-glass window with a heraldic design threw a coloured pattern on the floor as the sun shone through its leaded panes. There was a long, broad passage with heavy doors on either side, and a strip of carpet along the boards.

"Still a little higher," said Otto von Menzel. "Nearer heaven!"

He laughed and took another flight of stairs two at a time.

Then he flung open a door and made a friendly gesture for the French officer to go in first.

"Not too bad, I hope?" he asked, following Gatières into the room.

"Superb!" said Armand Gatières.

It was not really superb, but it was large and comfortable, with an enchanting view of the cathedral through old-fashioned windows with diamond-shaped panes. Gatières noticed that there was a single bed at the far end, half hidden by a screen, and close to the window a long, heavily carved table with German-looking chairs with wooden eagles as arm-rests. A deep leather chair, modern, and luxurious for tired limbs, stood by the porcelain stove. But what caught Gatières' eyes were several nice-looking prints of the eighteenth

century and a number of portrait sketches in charcoal boldly and admirably done. One of them was the head and shoulders of a young girl, very pretty and vivacious, with two long schoolgirl plaits.

"Those drawings are admirable," said Gatières. "Full of character. That girl's head, for instance—it's alive!"

Otto von Menzel smiled and looked pleased.

"That's my sister Ina, as she was five years ago. My mother has packed her off to Berlin lest she should fall a victim to French assault. Absurd! As if she couldn't look after herself."

He laughed, and then a moment later became a little grave.

"Those sketches were done by my brother Heinrich. He was going to be an artist, but he was killed in the war, like so many others."

Armand Gatières answered with emotion.

"I am sorry about that. I too had a brother killed in the war. He was hit hardly an hour after he had reached the front."

Otto von Menzel shrugged his shoulders with a kind of impatience.

"It was a massacre! In my opinion an insanity. Everybody was mad, don't you think? But then I belong to a different generation. I happened to miss all that filth. Also, I am a pacifist, much to the annoyance of my honoured father. I have no use whatever for war or the old ideas of old men rooted in the past. You see, I belong to the Youth Movement. We are working out a different kind of philosophy. We are looking forward to a new kind of world."

Armand Gatières smiled at this tall lad with his straw-coloured hair and blue eyes, dressed in nothing but a white shirt, open at the neck, and a pair of shorts above his bare knees—like the younger son in a Grimm's fairy-tale. He had a devotion to all young men, having seen so many die. Youth—German or French, English or American—the youth

that still lived after the war—symbolized for him an escape from death, a promise of life, the return of hope, the future with its vital resurrection.

"A new kind of world?" he asked. "That's good. That's what we want. I'm all for it."

The German boy sat on the edge of the bed with his hands clasped round his bare knees and spoke in rapid French.

"My father and mother think of you as an enemy. You're going to have a rough time with them—although I will say that my father has a certain sense of *noblesse oblige*, and that my mother really is perfectly good-natured. But they have the old-fashioned tradition. They think back to German monarchy and militarism. They are broken-hearted because Germany has been defeated, although they pretend that Germany wasn't defeated! As far as I'm concerned I think nothing about all that. It was a blood bath in which the old order was killed and buried. Now we must create a new order in the world—the comradeship of youth across the frontiers, a spiritual war against materialism and industrialism which caused all this bloodshed. We must get control of the machine which is the enemy of mankind. We must learn to live simply, and get closer to Nature again. We must get back to more primitive ways of life, in touch with the old earth and with flowers and trees. We must dedicate ourselves to beauty in mind and body."

He spoke with a smile on his lips, as though rather shy of talking such tall stuff, and yet believing it. Perhaps he had learnt it by heart from some book.

Gatières was impressed. He was even moved by emotion. It was the kind of vision which had taken hold of his own mind as he had pondered about the meaning of life when death had been close to him.

"Those are excellent ideals," he said. "I must say I agree with them. Are there many young men in Germany who think like that?"

Otto von Menzel laughed, as though this question amused him.

"Certainly ! Haven't you heard of this *Jugendbewegung*—the German Youth Movement ? We have millions of members in all classes. It has spread all through Germany after the war. My father, who doesn't agree with it, says it has spread like a disease. He thinks we're all mad and immoral, because some of us go about with girls, wandering in the countryside, sleeping out of doors, not wearing many clothes, playing and singing in the villages where they give us food and shelter in the rough weather. That's only one part of the Youth Movement. We call ourselves *Wandervögel*—the Wandering Birds. I'm one of them, and very keen on it. As a matter of fact I'm off to-day for another spell."

"I'm sorry," said Gatières. "I was hoping for more of your company."

Otto von Menzel laughed again.

"Oh, I shall soon be back ! Most of our members have to earn their living somehow. It's only for week-ends or short spells."

He rose from the bed and held out his hand.

"*Auf Wiedersehen !*"

Armand Gatières shook hands heartily.

"*Auf Wiedersehen ! Glückliche Reise !*"

The boy raised his eyebrows.

"You speak German ?"

"I was a prisoner of war. How is it that you speak French so well—so admirably ?"

Otto von Menzel explained that his parents had lived in Paris before the war. His father was German consul there. His sister had been born there.

"Ina speaks French perfectly," he said.

Then he raised his hand in friendly salute, smiled at the French officer, and left him in his new billet at the top of a German house overlooking the cathedral of Mainz.



## IV

The British Army of Occupation had its headquarters at Cologne, and Captain Gatières obtained a pass—not necessary at a later date—to enter the British zone and visit that city.

His purpose was to call on an English staff officer named Major Marshall, who had become engaged to his sister Lucille. They had met during the war, when Lucille was the youngest nurse in the hospital at Compiègne to which Captain Marshall was brought with a machine-gun bullet through his arm after the second battle of the Marne. He had visited her in Avignon and Gatières' mother had written very appreciatively of him.

"A charming young man ; not intellectual, of course, according to French ideas, but, I feel sure, a gentleman of good character and excellent disposition. Lucille is very happy with him, and I have no reason to object to her marriage later on when his military service is completed. It is nice to think that he fought for France and speaks French quite well, although with an English accent."

Lucille herself had written to her brother begging him to call on her *cher Anglais*.

"His name is Arthur," she wrote, "like the knightly king of the Round Table. He looks like our own Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*. He is highly intelligent, although *maman* thinks he is very stupid ! He loves me in a way that is flattering to my conceit. He even thinks me beautiful, my dear Armand ! You will like him, I am sure, and even if you didn't—which is impossible—you would pretend to like him for my sake. We are going to be married when he leaves the army and my only panic is the thought that I shall have to live in England among people who will be strange to me."

Gatières strolled about Cologne for a time before paying his call upon a future brother-in-law. The cathedral, he thought, was magnificent, but without the usual magic of

Gothic architecture. It looked as though it had been built of cast-iron, and had not weathered. Scottish sentries in kilts and bonnets like the *bérets* of his own Provençal peasants were pacing up and down the Hohenzollern Bridge which swung across the Rhine. He stood watching them for a few minutes and staring thoughtfully at the river which flowed beneath them.

The Rhine! A thousand legends of German romance and history belonged to it. It was part of the poetry and enchantment of the German spirit as Schiller and other great minds had revealed it in their works. He had read bits of Schiller as a prisoner of war, learning German. What a humiliation to the German mind to have enemy sentries posted on this bridge!

Years ago, when some of his fellow officers had talked lightly of advancing to the Rhine, he had smiled with irony and incredulity. He had never believed for a single moment that the French Armies and their allies would get anywhere near that river. He had been convinced, like most others before the last phase, that the two opposing armies, those millions of men, would remain locked in their trench systems, carrying on a war of attrition year after year, with attacks and counter-attacks, gaining a few yards or a mile or two, this way and that, until exhaustion compelled some kind of peace. He had been called a defeatist by some of his brother officers for expressing that view before they too gave up hope, in most cases, or died in the usual way. After the Nivelle offensive some of the troops had mutinied, sick of this ceaseless slaughter. Now they were on the Rhine, at the cost of millions of young lives, English as well as French.

Those Scottish troops had been great fighters, from all he had heard. The Germans called them "The Ladies from Hell". Queer, that men should wear petticoats! It seemed to him barbarous. But they were smart-looking lads—very young—just boys, most of them. And the English soldiers walking about all looked young and fresh and clean. They



wore their uniforms with a fine swagger and were spotless. His own *Chasseurs Alpains*, of whom he was proud, were well turned out, but not quite so immaculate as these young English. It was partly their complexion, fresh-coloured, with fair skins closely shaved. Some of his lads had blue chins before they were twenty-one. If they went unshaved for a day they looked like *poilus*. In the trenches some of them had gone unshaven for weeks, poor lads. But most of those were now dead ; his lot of the Somme and Verdun. This was a new vintage of youth—the last reserves.

Gatières met a French officer down the Hohestrasse of Cologne. It was Lieutenant Mercier of the General Staff, who seized him by the arm.

"*Tiens, mon ami, qu'est-ce-que tu fais ici ?*"

"I am about to visit a future brother-in-law," said Gatières, explaining this episode of family history.

"Let us drink some German beer together," said Mercier. "It is fine stuff for a long thirst. It's the only good thing one finds in Germany."

Gatières laughed and shook his head.

"That is too sweeping ! I find much to admire. Look at that porcelain in this shop window. It is very good, don't you think ? Those animals are admirably done. And this German architecture—these old houses—they have a dignity and a beauty which I find very attractive. They remind me of the old fairy tales I used to read as a boy."

Mercier laughed at him.

"*Sacré bon Dieu !* Are you becoming pro-Boche, may I ask ?"

"I like to get at the truth of things," said Gatières quietly. Lieutenant Mercier looked cynical.

"Personally I dislike the truth of things in Cologne. It is too painful. It is even disgusting."

"For what reason ?" asked Gatières.

Mercier dropped his voice and glanced over his shoulder at some English officers passing on the pavement of the Hohestrasse.

"*Mon vieux!* These English are inexplicable! Within three hours of arriving in this city—I happened to be here, *liaison* officer—they were fraternizing with these damned Boches. I give you my word that when I sat at lunch with some English cavalry officers on the very day of their arrival they talked to the waiters of the Domhof as though they were old friends! The head waiter had been a machine-gunner at a place called Fontaine-Notre-Dame, which had actually been attacked a few months before the Armistice by these very cavalry officers—dismounted, of course. There they were, talking to him with arrangements of forks and spoons to show the geographical situation. One of these fellows—a young aristocrat—actually called that *Schweinehund* 'old man', and said it was a lucky thing he hadn't been pipped. A lamentable lack of dignity! A complete forgetfulness of German mentality!"

"It's the English sporting spirit," said Gatières.

Lieutenant Mercier made a gesture of disapproval.

"War isn't a sport. One doesn't show the sporting spirit to a devouring monster whose jaws are red with blood. One kicks him in the belly. But let us go and drink that beer."

He led the way into a place called Germania—a big beer restaurant where an orchestra was playing old English airs. It was crowded with non-commissioned officers and men of the British Army, and with German civilians who sat among them, including a number of women and girls who looked quite respectable.

"You see!" said Mercier, as he sat down at a small table and ordered two Pilseners. "These Englishmen fraternize with the Boches as though they were blood-brothers."

"In some way they are," said Gatières, with a smile. "Anglo-Saxon. German really. With some French blood, after the Norman Conquest. No doubt there is an affinity."

Mercier shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps it accounts for the hypocrisy of the English character—their genius for political treachery. They are

already forsaking the Entente Cordiale, which after all had no real basis in sentiment. They are essentially a nation of shopkeepers. It is a question of business with them. They want to make friends with the Boche in order to sell their filthy coal and their beastly cotton goods. They were on our side in the war not because they loved us but because they were afraid of Germany as a trade rival and a naval menace."

Armand Gatières disagreed with him. He thought the English people acted on emotion rather than upon any intellectual policy. They hated intolerance and injustice.

"My dear Gatières, you are reciting our leading articles at the time when England came into the war! You believe they hate intolerance and injustice? How then explain their treatment of Ireland for centuries past, the arrogance of their aristocratic caste, the bully spirit of John Bull in every part of the Empire?"

Gatières did not argue with him, not knowing much about the English, except from the reading of history. He was interested in the scene about him. Certainly these English soldiers seemed on the best terms with the German civilians of Cologne. At a table next to him two sergeants of artillery were engaged in friendly conversation with two German girls who seemed to be chaperoned by their mother.

"*Noch ein Bier, Frau Schmidt?*" asked one of the sergeants of this middle-aged woman. "It's fine stuff. *Sehr schon*. Good for the tummy, old dear. Won't do you a bit of harm."

"*Danke, mein Herr, ich habe schön genug getrunken.*"

The English sergeant laughed heartily.

"*Getrunken?* Well, I must say you don't look it, Mother!"

One of the German girls giggled and spoke in English.

"She doesn't mean drunk. She means that she has drunk enough. There is a difference, *nicht wahr?*"

The English sergeant heartily agreed that there was a difference. He and his friend had not always been quite sure of the dividing line. And this German beer was

wonderful. In fact he thought everything in Germany was wonderful, including the blue-eyed girls. Ever since coming to Cologne he had been convinced that England had been fighting the wrong people. Now those Frenchies were a rotten lot—as mean as hell. They had even charged for water from their filthy wells. At least one bastard had wanted to, until he was ticked off properly by the sergeant-major.

*"Ich verstehe das nicht!"* laughed one of the girls. *"Sie sprechen sehr komisch."*

"She says you're a comical cuss, old bird," said the other sergeant, laughing heartily.

Armand Gatières was interested and amused by the behaviour of the two sergeants and those German girls. One of the girls kept blushing when the younger of the two sergeants looked into her eyes with a good-natured smile, and when he took her hand and held it under the table. He had no objection to that. A young man and a young woman mutually attracted. It was life.

"These English soldiers are marrying German girls every week," said Mercier gloomily. "I believe the Headquarters Staff encourages them deliberately."

"Better than not marrying them," said Gatières dryly.

*"C'est dégoûtant!"* was the definite opinion of Lieutenant Mercier. He thought it was treachery to France.

Gatières left his friend and walked up the Hohestrasse again to call on Major Marshall at the British Headquarters. The street was so crowded with German civilians and British soldiers that he was jostled among them. There was no sign of hostility anywhere. He noticed two officers standing in a doorway talking to a tall young German and a girl who looked like his sister. They were laughing together until the two officers left with friendly salutes.

Gatières was astounded by the difference between the social atmosphere in Cologne and in Mainz. In his own zone of occupation there was a sense of enmity visible in the streets.

No German girls ever talked to French officers or men unless they were little sluts. German civilians of respectable class avoided all social contact beyond that of strict necessity. French soldiers off duty stood about in groups amidst a hostile population, sullen sometimes, because of this psychological enmity to their presence. And several times he had seen a horror, a hatred, a burning indignation in German eyes when they passed African soldiers—the coal-black Senegalese—who leered at German women and made coarse jests about them in their native dialect. That would always be remembered against France. It was a mistake.

Captain Gatières was shown into a room at the British Headquarters, after sending up his card to Major Marshall, who did not keep him waiting. He held out his hand in answer to Gatières' salute and spoke in French with a rather charming accent.

"Lucille has often spoken about you. It is very good of you to call. You will have dinner with me, of course?"

"*Enchanté !*" said Gatières.

He liked the look of this future brother-in-law—a tall young man whose uniform fitted him like a glove, and who wore a pair of top-boots with spurs which excited the admiration of a captain of Chasseurs. These English, he thought, have a genius for boots. It is their speciality.

This English officer had grey-blue eyes in which there was a hint of shyness, and a little fair moustache, like the hero of a novel. His complexion was almost girlish in its freshness and yet the ribbons on his breast showed that he had seen a lot of service. He had been twice wounded, as Gatières remembered from Lucille's letters. • •

Conversation was difficult. It lagged sometimes in the Domhof Hotel, where they dined together. The English officer was inclined to be monosyllabic and found difficulty in expressing any serious thought of an abstract kind. Perhaps his knowledge of French did not go as far as that.

"The British Army seems to be on excellent terms with

the German population," said Gatières in one of these awkward pauses.

Major Marshall smiled.

"Yes. . . . Lots of marriages. . . . I think our fellows rather like the Boche, and especially the Boche girls. It's different in the French zone, I'm told."

Gatières nodded.

"It is difficult for us to forget the ruin which the war made in France, and all our agonies."

"One understands that," said the young English officer. "Of course, I'm pro-French now that I'm engaged to your sister. All the same . . ."

He hesitated and did not finish that sentence.

"All the same . . .?" asked Gatières politely.

Major Marshall had that shyness in his eyes again. He coughed slightly in a nervous way.

"It may be a mistake to drive the Boche too hard," he said. "I mean—thinking of the future. We don't want a war of revenge. Personally I've had enough war to last me a lifetime."

"You think France is too severe?" asked Gatières.

This future brother-in-law laughed still more nervously.

"Oh, it's not for me to express an opinion! But I think it was a mistake to send black troops into the German towns. They hate it, you know. It makes them see red—instead of black. Then there's that question of the Separatist movement on the Rhine. Your High Commissioner is trying to encourage it, and is playing into the hands of that fellow Dr. Dorten. It's not really based on any feeling among the people. On the contrary! It seems unpatriotic to every decent Rhinelander."

He seemed uneasy at having expressed this opinion so frankly, and glanced over his shoulder at some other officers drinking whiskies-and-sodas at a table next to them.

"Perhaps I ought not to say these things. I'm only a junior staff officer, and I don't want to be reported to French headquarters."

"This is a private conversation," said Gatières reassuringly. "We are going to be brothers-in-law, are we not? In any case, I agree with your remarks about the negro soldiers. Their presence is a deplorable error, I am sure."

Major Marshall was obviously relieved when Gatières rose to thank him and say good-bye.

"I will write to Lucille and tell her that I had a delightful evening with you," said Gatières.

Marshall laughed in his self-conscious way.

"Well, I hope it hasn't been too boring! I'm not much good at conversation, especially in French."

"Your French is excellent."

"It's kind of you to say so."

"But it's the truth."

They shook hands, and Gatières was almost painfully aware of the strong grip of his future brother-in-law.

"Lucille is wonderful," he said at the door of the Domhof.

"I hope she will like England one day."

"I hope England will like my sister," answered Gatières with a laugh.

"England will fall in love with her."

"Oh, that is a charming thought!"

"Well, good night, old man," said Marshall, speaking in English.

Gatières took a late train back to Mainz, and walked through the dark streets to the old house of Herr von Menzel. Two military policemen passed him and saluted. On his way he heard the sound of a scuffle in a courtyard not far from his billet. A shriek rang out in the silence of the night. It was a girl's voice, and he halted and stared into the darkness where an old lantern glimmered feebly so that only one wall was illumined.

A French soldier staggered out of the courtyard into the street. He was drunk and his right cheek was bleeding.

"What are you doing, my man?" asked Gatières sternly.

The man pulled himself up and saluted.



"It is nothing, *mon capitaine*. I am perhaps a little drunk. It is this German beer which gets into one's legs."

"What are those marks on your face?"

"It was a cat, *mon capitaine*. One of those German cats. They are very fierce."

"Get back to your billet."

Captain Gatières turned on his heel and went to his own house. There were times when it was necessary to turn a blind eye to such affairs. He was no great disciplinarian. He had his own latch key now to the house of Herr von Menzel.

## V

Herr von Menzel and his wife behaved with courtesy as well as dignity to this French officer who had been quartered on them. For some months Armand Gatières was intimidated by the lady because of her icy coldness, which positively froze his blood when he happened to meet her in the hall or in her husband's study, to which he was invited sometimes for conversation after dinner. Gradually, however, he noticed that she thawed a little, that the hardness of her eyes—wonderfully blue—softened somewhat, and that now and then she forced herself to say a few gracious words, as when one day she hoped that her son Otto did not waste Gatières' time too much.

"He likes to talk to you," she said, "and I am quite sure he talks the greatest nonsense."

Gatières laughed and defended the young man.

"On the contrary! We have the most interesting conversations."

"It is good of you to be so patient with him."

Perhaps it was this friendship with her son which broke down the lady's hostility to the presence of a French officer in her house. At least it was a relief to him that she should not find him personally guilty of all the grievances she still

held in her heart against the French occupation on the Rhine, of which she made no secret. He even had the satisfaction now and then of making her laugh—which he regarded as a triumph.

Herr von Menzel himself was free-spoken and even talkative, and though he was always provocative in his opinions, with most of which Gatières disagreed profoundly, he expressed them with a blunt courtesy and ironical humour which robbed them of any offence, at least so far as Gatières was concerned, though perhaps other French officers might have found them intolerable.

There was one bee in his bonnet which Gatières tried to avoid, though it invariably returned. It was the question of war guilt. A hundred times he inveighed against that admission which had been forced upon the German nation by the signatories of the Peace Treaty, blackmailed, he said, into admitting that clause because of the misery and starvation of their people.

"It is a lie!" he said, pacing up and down his booklined room. "History will never endorse it. Germany had no other thought than to defend her frontiers, hemmed in as they were by hostile Powers, jealous of our dynamic energy, our commercial prosperity, and our overseas trade. England hated us as a trade rival, and feared us as a naval Power challenging their arrogant supremacy at sea. Russia, afraid of revolution at home, was anxious for war as a safety-valve and as the only method of arousing the loyalty of the nation to a dynasty already threatened. Her statesmen and diplomats were imbued with the vision of Pan-Slavism thrust as a spear-head into Europe as far as Serbia. They coveted the possession of Constantinople. They had a vision of their Cossacks riding over East Prussia, slaying and burning, as afterwards they did. France under Poincaré was afraid of the rising power of Germany and conspired with Russia for a future war which he believed to be inevitable and necessary."

"No, no !" said Gatières, with a laugh. "I cannot agree to that, sir. The French nation loathed the idea of war. They would never have supported Poincaré in a war of aggression."

Herr von Menzel raised his hands.

"But they did ! They marched to a man. They fought for four and a half years. You were one of their officers. You ought to know, my dear sir !"

Gatières lit another *Gauloise bleue*.

"Forgive me, sir ! I must remind you of the speeches of your Emperor and public men long before the war. I remember some talk of the mailed fist, and shining armour, and other words which sent a *frisson* through every French mind, because they preached a gospel of Might and were a challenge to European peace."

"The Kaiser was a romantic," said Herr von Menzel. "He talked to the German people in the spirit of Wagner. In any case it was right to arouse the spirit of German youth and train them for a war which was insisted upon by all our enemies."

"You created the greatest military machine in the world," said Gatières.

Herr von Menzel gave an ironical laugh.

"Not strong enough, as events turned out ! We had to fight against the world—white men, black men, yellow men, Americans, Australians, Russians, everybody who hated Germany. We were unprepared."

Gatières was very patient. He tried to break down the illusion, as he thought it, in this German mind.

"Forgive me again, sir ! The war need never have happened but for the ultimatum to Serbia after the murder at Serajevo. It was the tocsin which called to arms. Serbia had even submitted to intolerable conditions."

Herr von Menzel was contemptuous of that argument.

"Serbia had to be punished as a nation of cut-throats, murderers, and dirty dogs. They were the *agents provocateurs*

of Russia, as doubtless you will admit. Russia made that police incident—it was no more than that—an excuse for mobilizing. It was in answer to that mobilization that Germany called her own men to the colours, reluctantly. The Kaiser endeavoured to the last moment to avert the final tragedy. It is written in history. The published documents prove it. The lie is unmasked.”

Captain Gatières flicked away the ash of his cigarette and answered quietly.

“And then the German troops invaded Belgium. But for that invasion the English would never have stood by the side of France.”

Herr von Menzel allowed himself to become a little angry.

“The English are—the English ! They mask a deep and traditional policy under the guise of stupidity and honesty. It is their consistent purpose to arrange a balance of power in Europe so that no one nation will be dominant. France will find now that the English are jealous of French supremacy. Gradually England will draw to the side of Germany against France. Mark my words, my dear sir ! As for the invasion of Belgium, I admit that it was an unfortunate necessity imposed upon us by reasons of defensive-attack. If we had not invaded Belgium, which violated her own neutrality, France would have used it as a corridor. In any case, what is Belgium ? Who are these Belgians ? They are entirely unimportant in the general scheme of world order.”

Armand Gatières veiled his eyes to hide the smile in them. On this point of war guilt he found it impossible to argue against a man who had a fixed idea impossible of persuasion or alteration. And from what he heard elsewhere, this same repudiation of war guilt existed in every German mind. That was dangerous. It was a psychological phenomenon which would lead to repudiation of other things. Because if they refused the admission of war guilt, the reparations and other penalties of defeat would seem to them unjust and intolerable.

There was another fixed idea in the mind of Herr von Menzel, who in many ways was highly reasonable.

He did not admit that Germany had been defeated in the field of war. He spoke always of "the unbeaten German Army", and of "our heroic troops who were invincible".

"We were stabbed in the back," he said, "by cowardly and panic-stricken politicians, weakened by defeatism and afraid of revolution. The people themselves—the people behind the lines—were enfeebled by hunger, and still more by the propaganda of Marxists and pacifists and enemies of the Fatherland. It was they, these weak-kneed scoundrels like Scheidemann and Ebert, who surrendered and betrayed the Kaiser and the German nation and the glorious German Army. Doubtless you will agree to that, *mon cher capitaine*? It is, after all, beyond any doubt."

Armand Gatières was unable to agree. He had not seen the last phase of the war, having been taken prisoner, but he had heard from many French officers of the broken *morale* of the German troops and the breakdown of their war machine. They had surrendered in droves. They had been incapable of holding a line for more than rearguard actions by machine-gun fire. They had exhausted their reserves, and they knew that however many Frenchmen and Englishmen they might kill in the last ditches of a desperate defence, another nation in arms—the Americans—fresh, ardent, innumerable, marvellously equipped, with inexhaustible supplies—were ready and beginning to attack. For a hundred kilometres on the way to the Rhine the roads were littered with the wreckage of the German war machine. The English had hammered them out of Belgium, out of Cambrai, and across the Hindenburg line—everywhere. They were defeated.

"The German Army in the field," said Herr von Menzel, "never lost a single battle. That is a record emblazoned for ever in the world's chronicles."

Very well! It was no use arguing on that point. On other matters he was more reasonable, though traditional

in his ideas. He despised the new German Republic and prophesied that it would not last many years.

"Our people need a monarchy," he said. "It is necessary for German unity and discipline. We have no instinct for democracy, which personally I regard as a disgusting illusion. Without leadership and headship a nation is a mob, and we are not yet a nation in the same sense as France or England. We are a collection of States with separate characteristics. Without the return of the Monarchy, Germany will become anarchical and disorderly. Besides, how can a great Empire like this be governed by sham idealists like Scheidemann and low-class fellows like Ebert? It's preposterous. It's a farce. It's a humiliation."

He paced up and down his room again like a caged wolf, with his pince-nez dangling and his thin hands restless behind his back.

"The Republic does not exist," he said. "It is a façade put up as a temporary peepshow. Behind it, thank God, are the old instincts and traditions and minds which belonged to pre-war Germany. They are lying low. But they are there, unchanged and unalterable. The administration is in their hands. The Civil Service, the Banks, the Universities, the Law Courts are staffed by men who have no allegiance to this sham democracy, and will one day denounce it. They stand firm against this insidious disease of Communism, which is a Russian microbe infecting the brains of hungry and embittered classes."

He turned abruptly and spoke to Gatières with great earnestness.

"My dear sir, I have no violent enmity against France, your great nation which has led the way of civilization for a thousand years. I say that sincerely, as a German. I speak French fairly well, as you are good enough to admit. I have lived many years in France. I have the greatest admiration for French art, and literature, and science, and mode of life. You are civilized. That is undeniable. You are the defenders



of a splendid culture. But I wish to warn you that if your Government presses Germany too hard, so that our people become hopeless and despairing like caged animals, like hungry dogs, they will ally themselves with the Russian Bolshevism and open the gates to that pestilential and destructive enemy of civilized ideals. Then what will happen to France, and to European civilization itself? Germany is the last barrier—the Hindenburg Line—against universal anarchy. Help us to be strong! Give us a chance to defeat this enemy in our midst! Do not bleed us, and humiliate us, and ruin us for the sake of victory and revenge. There are more serious things at stake. There is Christendom. There is culture. There is human order. I speak to you—a French officer—frankly and sincerely. A strong Germany, a hopeful Germany, is necessary to Europe. That is God's truth as I see it."

For a moment his eyes blinked with a sudden moisture. He put his hand on the shoulder of Armand Gatières and spoke emotionally.

"I am a good German. But I am also a good European. I believe in scholarship and intellect and moral decency. I see it threatened by Satanic ideas and human wolves."

"The future is very uncertain," said Gatières gravely.

There was a tap at the door and Frau von Menzel came in, smiling.

"You are still talking, Heinrich? You will weary Captain Gatières."

Herr von Menzel beat his breast.

*"Ich plaudere immer zu viel. Entschuldigen Sie, mein Herr!"*

Armand Gatières assured them both that he had been very much interested.

## VI

Young Otto von Menzel was away from home at frequent intervals, and Armand Gatières missed him, as he found

considerable pleasure in his conversation and character. For weeks at a time he disappeared on those expeditions with groups of young men and women who called themselves *Wandervögel*—wandering birds—and who seemed to lead a gipsy kind of life as part of a new philosophy of a vague, idealistic kind harking back to the romanticism of primitive German life as depicted by poets and historians who left out the coarseness and brutalities of early medievalism. Harking back, yet looking forward to a new conception of civilization, based not upon industrial competition, international finance and Big Business, but upon the fundamental simplicities of labour on the land, linked with arts and crafts, and governed by a kind of Spartan self-discipline.

Gatières saw many times in Mainz groups of these young people setting forth on one of their journeys to the woods and hills or newly back from that adventure. They were rather attractive, he thought. The young men wore a minimum of clothes and their arms, chests, and legs were bronzed by an outdoor life. Most of them carried packs on their backs, slung on to cross braces, and generally there was a musical instrument—a mandoline or guitar—among this spare kit. They leaned on their alpenstocks, talking gravely with each other, or chatting with the girls among their party. These girls were of the same type—sometimes so similar to the boys that it was difficult to decide their sex. They were equally bronzed. Some of them wore shorts like the young men, and carried packs just as heavy, with a pair of strong boots strapped to their haversacks. The sun glinted on their straw-coloured hair or the wind blew it across their eyes.

As a Frenchman, Gatières wondered whether these young men and women could wander about together without sentimental and emotional relationship. It did not seem to him possible, human nature being what it was, and especially German human nature. He could understand the anxiety of Frau von Menzel for the morals of her son—she strongly

disapproved of this *Wandervögel* movement—and the unconcealed irritation of her husband at what he called the disorderly tramp life of that young man.

"I am afraid my son has gone completely mad," he said one day. "I find we don't speak the same language. He ridicules every tradition which I hold sacred. He talks fantastic nonsense which I find hard to tolerate without an outburst of anger. As for this *Jugendbewegung* and its ridiculous *Wandervögel*, I confess that it seems to me subversive of all morality and reason. Are we to go back to the state of verminous gipsydom? Are we to have promiscuity among the sexes? How are these young people going to earn their living in an industrial age? In my opinion the movement is engineered by Communists and traitors who are trying to debauch our German youth."

Armand Gatières tried to reassure an anxious and irritated father.

"Naturally I don't know much about this Youth Movement, sir, but judging from what your son tells me, I do not see any evil in it. It is really a revolt against despair caused by the war—and against the ugliness and materialism of an over-industrialized civilization. In any case, it is youth seeking for some way of joy after so much death."

Herr von Menzel laughed scornfully.

"You defend my son's views as a special pleader on his behalf. That is chivalrous of you. But what you say is ridiculous, *mon cher capitaine*, if you will excuse my saying so. This *Jugendbewegung* is another name for crawling pacifism, and dislike of honest work, and free love between the sexes. I regard it as a filthy and disgusting cult, and I am ashamed that my own son should be perverted by it."

"Heinrich!" cried Frau von Menzel, putting her hand on her husband's arm. "You go too far. Otto is very young. He will grow out of these ideas. I dare say you were equally romantic as a young man when you were writing all that poetry, my dear!"

Herr von Menzel laughed good-naturedly and his anger disappeared for the moment.

"There is truth in that. Youth is the time of folly. It is possible that even Otto may become sensible in a year or two. This Youth Movement with its absurd cult will disappear when all these boys have to face the grim realities of earning a livelihood and getting down to work."

"That is perhaps the tragedy of life," said Gatières with a smile. "The illusions of youth are dispelled always by grim realities. What a pity!"

Otto von Menzel came back from his wanderings from time to time as casually as he had gone away, and always he tapped at Gatières' bedroom door and entered with a friendly word or two of greeting. Every time he seemed more deeply bronzed, so that his very blue eyes seemed extraordinarily light and vivid. His straw-coloured hair was streaked where the sun seemed to have bleached it.

"Still studying German?" he asked on one of these visits.

"Intensively," said Gatières. "Two hours a day. What a language! It is like learning six languages. But I am making progress. Let us talk in German."

Otto von Menzel preferred to speak French to a French officer, but occasionally he lapsed into his own tongue.

"How long is France going to bully us? I hear fantastic stories of a French plot to detach the Rhineland from the Reich by bribing groups of gaolbirds to set up a Separatist State."

"I am not concerned with that," said Gatières with some embarrassment. "Fortunately it is not in my department."

Otto von Menzel laughed.

"If every Frenchman were like you, Germany would be pro-French. It would make things easy."

Gatières was pleased by this compliment.

"Tell me some of your adventures," he suggested. "Where have you been all this time? In what ditches have you been sleeping with blue-eyed maidens?"

This remark—not meant too seriously—caused the boy to flare up with a momentary anger.

“You are always suggesting that the *Wandervögel* are an immoral lot. It is your French way of regarding sex.”

Gatières defended himself good-naturedly.

“One cannot ignore the laws of biology! They were not invented by Frenchmen, I believe.”

Otto von Menzel calmed down and answered with better humour.

“You are somewhat older than I am and therefore you do not understand. It is like my father. He is convinced that because these girls go about with us we are indulging in free love all the time.”

“Part of the time?” asked Gatières, with a hint of irony which he could not resist.

The young German replied gravely.

“Self-discipline is part of our creed. If there is any mating—and I do not deny that it happens now and then—it is more natural than the love-affairs of over-sophisticated people in over-heated rooms. We walk in the open air. We are not ashamed of our bodies. We have clean minds—unlike the secret mode of pre-war people, who were furtive and guilty in their idea of sex, as far as I can find out. We have established a better sense of comradeship between men and women. If we happen to love, it is with the loyalty and simplicity of an earlier age, when a man’s mate was faithful to him and when they went hand in hand through life in decent partnership. No doubt there are weaklings among the *Wandervögel*. I do not pretend we are companies of angels. But we have a code and ideals which are better than the sneaking immoralities of the pre-war middle class, and less dirty than the marketable vice of the cabaret and the dance hall.”

“It is an idyll—this life of the *Wandervögel*,” said Gatières with a smile in his eyes, yet not without sincerity. “I envy you. I regret that I walk with a limp because of a machine-

gun bullet, and that, as a French officer, I cannot join your adventure. How charming to walk hand in hand with a German *Mädchen* through dark woods into glades of light!"

"Come with us!" suggested Otto, laughingly. "I will lend you a white shirt and a pair of shorts. You speak German well enough. I will introduce you to an intelligent girl."

"*Merci! . . . Charmante idée!*"

Armand Gatières liked the idea, though, of course, it was beyond his reach. He was not immune from the ordinary desires of men. He craved sometimes for a little love, a little tenderness, the charm of womanhood. It was not always amusing to be a French officer away from the society of his own folk, in a hostile population where even the women turned their eyes away from him if sometimes he was attracted by a pretty face. He felt devilish lonely sometimes, especially in the evenings, studying German in his room. It was his own fault, of course. He could always join his fellow officers in one of the cabarets of Mainz where German women were paid not to resent the amorous advances of French officers also lonely and divorced from their own womenfolk. That kind of thing did not interest him. His early training had made him fastidious. He was a sceptic, but with a tradition of spirituality which still disciplined his senses. He had never yet paid a woman for her kisses. And yet sometimes he suffered for this asceticism which to many of his friends seemed ridiculous. He missed the tenderness and charm of women and all that feminine side of life which is so strong a need to most Frenchmen, and perhaps most of all to a Frenchman of Provence, with its tradition of love and something of passion in the blood. He looked like D'Artagnan—some of his men called him that—but he behaved like Athos, so that his friends thought him icy cold and a dry stick. In any case he was a shy fellow in the presence of women. He would have felt a fool if it had been possible to put on that white shirt and shorts and go with Otto von Menzel



and his *Wandervögel*. It was only in imagination that it seemed alluring. It would be fantastic, anyhow, for a French officer attached to the Headquarters Staff!

## VII

Once, after an absence of several months, Otto Menzel came back looking less bronzed than usual, and with a graver look in his eyes.

"*Tiens !*" said Armand Gatières. "*Enchanté de vous voir, mon ami !*"

He shook the boy's hand and inquired about his recent history.

"Have you been living like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island?"

The German boy shook his head.

"Far from it. I have been in Berlin, trying to find some kind of work."

"Any luck?"

"None. Nothing that I could do without loss of self-respect. I had an offer which I rejected. It was to serve cocktails in a *Weinstube* in the Friedrichstrasse. A small salary with a percentage on the drinks."

"*Dégoûtant !*" cried Armand Gatières. "You can do better than that, my dear lad."

"I couldn't do worse," agreed the boy, "but I don't know that I can do better. I have been fairly well educated, thanks to my father, but what's the good of education nowadays? The universities are turning out thousands of fellows like me, and the professions are overcrowded. As for business, there is not much doing in a defeated nation where half the population is undernourished. May I smoke one of your filthy cigarettes?"

"Please!"

The young German sat on the edge of the bed and was silent for a few minutes.

"How's Berlin?" asked Gatières.

Otto von Menzel laughed, and raised his hands for a moment with the gesture of a soldier who surrenders. At least, Gatières was reminded of some soldiers—and one young officer like this boy—whom he had captured from a German dug-out.

"It's hell's playground," said the boy. "It is a *danse macabre*. It is worse than war."

He spoke with a kind of disgust and despair.

"In what way?" asked Gatières.

"In every way. The men and women who went through the war have all gone mad. It is, I suppose, the reaction from discipline and horror. Berlin night life is a nightmare of filth and immorality. Naked women dancing to negro bands. Drink and drugs. Jazz. A St. Vitus's dance of foxtrots and tangoes. Shameless vice, while the blind and the crippled hold out their hands to the passers-by and beggars slouch through the streets with hands like claws. The war profiteers are still rich, it seems. There are many motor-cars in Unter den Linden. The Adlon is crowded with American business men and German harlots. The Jewish financiers are gambling in German marks and American dollars. In the working quarters the people are living on cabbage soup and bread which has no nourishment. Friends of mine are almost destitute—middle-class families like mine! I saw a girl who has to go to bed when her underclothing is washed. I know a boy—a cousin of mine—who can't afford to buy his textbooks for his science degree. He goes without meat, except one day a week, and he is mostly worried about his boots. But those who somehow get hold of German marks—the swindlers—spend them in champagne and orgies among the perverses and the drug fiends. That's Berlin!"

"Not good," said Armand Gatières thoughtfully.

"It is the despair of defeat."

Otto von Menzel groaned.

"We have lost our old gods," he said, "and our old pride.

There is no hope ahead. It is the downfall of a people. It is the end of an era—perhaps the end of civilization. Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die !”

He stood up from the bed and went over to the mantelpiece and leaned against it.

“Personally,” he said, with a slight laugh, in which there was great bitterness, “I shan’t regret very much if it is the end of civilization, as it was so called by the war generation. It was a dirty kind of civilization—don’t you think ? It was founded on greed and selfishness. The rich were very rich. The poor were very poor—the slaves of the machine. People like my father keep talking about the old glories of pre-war Germany. What were those glories ? Masses of stupid officers bullying battalions of cowed and automatic men. Great industrialists like Stinnes buying up all the factories and keeping their workers on starvation wages. The Kaiser, surrounded by back-bending sycophants who kept the truth from him. A prosperous middle class with fat bellies and large families and the brains of sheep.”

Armand Gatières went across the room and put his hand on the shoulder of the young man.

“You speak too bitterly ! Life is full of injustice. It is difficult to get a perfect rhythm. Youth—and I am not so enormously old !—is outraged by its first acquaintance with evil and unfairness. But in Germany, as in France, there are artists and poets and scholars and scientists and masses of pleasant people living admirable lives, good-natured and intelligent. They are still the hope of the world.”

The German boy shrugged his shoulders and then laughed uneasily.

“Is there any hope ? Is man a reasonable animal ? I am beginning to give up all belief in human progress.”

Armand Gatières patted him on the back.

“You disappoint me, my dear lad ! I was one of your disciples. I was becoming converted to the idealism of the *Jugendbewegung*. Have you lost faith in that ?”

The boy stood silent, staring out of the window at the pinnacles of Mainz Cathedral, like lacework against a clear sky. But he was not looking at that familiar view, perhaps, but trying to see life as a whole with the desperate need of youth to understand its forces and mysteries, and to find its own place and purpose in them.

"I believe in the ideals of the *Jugendbewegung*," he said presently, "but I'm afraid that they are only dreams in a world of corruption and greed and beastliness."

Armand Gatières, this French officer, had a sense of pity for German youth, disillusioned, suffering the penalties of their fathers' defeat, thwarted of the hopes which are the heritage of youth. He tried to cheer the boy up, and succeeded in making him laugh, and even persuaded him to bring his accordion from his own room and play some of the old German songs in which he accompanied the voices of his *Wandervögel* on their way through the woods and villages. He was a good musician on that instrument and made an attractive figure as he sat on the edge of Gatières' bed, fingering the keys, while the light from the window touched his sunbaked hair.

"By the way," he said presently, between one tune and another, "my sister Ina is coming home for Christmas. She and I are good comrades."

## VIII

The German population in the occupied territory were spared some of the troubles and conflicts which broke out repeatedly in other parts of Germany, causing much bloodshed and many brutalities of class warfare. There was fighting in Munich, where a Communist régime was established for two months until suppressed with ruthless severity. An attempt by Monarchist officers to overthrow the Republic under the leadership of one of them named Kapp was

defeated by a general strike in which millions of workers refused all labour. In the Ruhr, that immense area of factory towns and heavy industries beyond the Rhine, the very powerhouse of Germany's industrial machine, underpaid workers, the slaves of the machines, hard driven and undernourished, revolted against their conditions and, under the spell of Lenin's gospel of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, seized control of the works and proclaimed their allegiance to the Soviet system.

The news of this Communist uprising sent a shudder throughout the middle classes of Germany. The spectre of the Russian revolution was a ghastly vision to a people who, in the mass, believed in discipline and order. Ever since Lenin had declared war upon the bourgeoisie, they had been haunted by the fear that the German workpeople would be infected by this propaganda of destruction. Soldiers who had entered Russia had come under its spell. German prisoners of war had come back with red flags waving from the carriage windows of the troop-trains. In the first days of revolution before the Armistice, the sailors from the Fleet had gone red, looting shops and stores in many cities with the aid of criminals liberated from the prisons. In Berlin the "Spartacists" had established a reign of terror until they were hunted and killed like wild beasts by ex-officers and military police.

This report of Communism in the Ruhr was a nightmare in the imagination of the new Republic, essentially bourgeois, if not Monarchist by instinct and tradition. In steel helmets and full war-kit the Reichswehr advanced against the barricades and barbed-wire defences of the Ruhr Communists, smashing their way through and dealing savagely with those armed workers who fought under the red rag of revolution. Many of them were shot, bayoneted, and bludgeoned.

Many fugitives from this class warfare fled into the occupied territory, where they were disarmed by French troops. They were pursued by the Storm Troops of the Reichswehr, who were also arrested and disarmed by French

and English guards. For a day or two there was great anxiety in French and British Headquarters. If the working classes of Cologne, Bonn, Mainz, and the Rhine bridgeheads were to rush the barriers in aid of their fighting comrades in the Ruhr, there might arise a state of anarchy and terror which could only be suppressed by most bloody fighting. That fear passed. But the French Command made these events an excuse for occupying the cities of Düsseldorf, Ruhrort, and Duisburg, as "sanctions" against the incursion of armed forces into the forbidden territory of the Rhineland.

Armand Gatières of the Headquarters Staff was ordered in the course of his duty to report on the situation in Düsseldorf. He reported that the employment of coloured troops was resented by the inhabitants. He had the honour to report that it might be advisable to replace them by French battalions whenever possible, in order to prevent regrettable incidents and unnecessary inflammation of German prejudice.

It was Colonel de la Prade who received and read this report.

"*Mon cher capitaine*," he said, in his ironical way, "in your own interests I shall not submit this document to the General. He is a man, as you know, of impatient temper. It occurs to me that you take a sentimental view and think more of German feelings than of French administration."

"I have been asked to make a report on the situation," answered Gatières coldly. "I have made it. Those are my views according to the truth, as I see it."

Colonel de la Prade twisted his white moustache with both hands. It was a distinguished moustache, of which he was a little proud, justifiably.

"*Très bien!* . . . But the truth is a matter of temperament and psychology. . . . In any case, truth has to be adapted to necessity. For your own private information, my dear Gatières, I may tell you in confidence that your report is contrary to the policy of the French Government, which has the very definite intention, I believe, of occupying the whole



of the Ruhr, in order to enforce German reparations, seriously in default, and to put a stranglehold on German industry. The occupation of Düsseldorf is the first step to a general advance."

"I very much regret to hear that," said Gatières gravely. "It seems to me a most sinister policy."

Colonel de la Prade looked at him sharply.

"You are not becoming pro-Boche, by any chance?"

Captain Gatières answered warmly.

"I do not understand the meaning of those words. I am a French officer. I need not remind you of my service."

Colonel de la Prade tapped him on the chest good-humouredly.

"I see your Croix de Guerre, my dear friend. But you talk strangely at times. I have noticed that our opinions clash when there is any discussion about enforcing our authority upon these fat-bellied Germans. I allow myself to wonder whether some blue-eyed German girl—they are not distasteful—has been doing a little propaganda in a quiet way."

Armand Gatières was very much annoyed.

"I resent that suggestion, *mon colonel*."

Colonel de la Prade went towards him and held his arms for a moment.

"I withdraw it," he said with perfect good humour. "But, my dear Gatières, do not let your idealism, your chivalry, interfere with your judgment as a soldier and as a staff officer. We have won the war, it is true. But now we have to win the peace; and that is not going to be easy. These Germans are a tough people. They are crafty, and they will put up a stubborn resistance to the reparations we justly demand for all the damage they have inflicted upon our poor France. They will endeavour to avoid those penalties by every means of evasion. If we do not keep them under our heel they will rise again, and come back again, and drench our fields with blood again. Chivalry—pity—generosity—is out of place with a nation of barbarians and brutes. Forgive

this little oration from an old officer who has a profound admiration for your character and intelligence."

He drew Armand Gatières closer to his chest. It was almost an embrace.

## IX

Otto von Menzel tapped at Gatières' door and opened it one evening, after another absence of some months.

"Excuse me," he said in German, "do I interrupt you in any way?"

"In the best way!" cried Gatières. "Come in and smoke one of my filthy cigarettes."

He happened to be reading Goethe—a very hard nut to crack—and he was glad to have a respite. In any case, he was always glad to see this German lad between his wanderings.

There was someone standing behind him, and Gatières rose from his chair. It was a young girl, not unlike this boy, but with lighter hair twisted round her head in thick plaits.

"My sister Ina," said Otto. "I want her to know you."

Armand Gatières was a shy man, and not very sure of himself in the presence of young women. He hadn't known them much. In spite of American "movies" which he saw now and then, the war zone had not been exactly crowded with them! They had not appeared to him in verminous billets or advanced posts. He had had no light conversation with ladies in No Man's Land. Consequently his education had been neglected in this respect. Now he pulled himself together and spoke a few stammering words.

"Please come in and sit down. . . . Your brother and I are good friends, though he disappears so often."

Ina von Menzel was perhaps two years older than her brother, and it was obvious to Gatières, after a short acquaintance, that she was the stronger character, and that Otto leaned upon her and had a high admiration for her intelligence.

At this first meeting she was quite self-possessed, and, when she saw the nervousness of the French officer, put him at his ease very quickly by her humour and frankness.

"Otto has told me a lot about you. I feel that I know you quite well."

"I hope he has made a good report," said Gatières.

"Excellent! . . . He assures me that you are a model lodger in my father's house. Also he thinks you have the courage of D'Artagnan and the nobility of Athos in *The Three Musketeers*."

Captain Gatières felt a slight colour creep under his skin. He laughed very nervously.

"That is too much! And it is wholly untrue. I have always been a timid fellow, and I have no sense of nobility. I belong to the French bourgeoisie."

"Otto tells me," continued Ina von Menzel, "that you are always fair to the German point of view and that you do not wish to inflict unnecessary tortures upon German men and women."

Gatières smiled, and felt less nervous. There was something a little boyish about this girl. Her eyes were very frank and friendly. She seemed to have a sense of humour.

"Certainly I am against torture," he answered. "I admit that I do not regard the rack and the thumbscrew with enthusiasm. But is there any French officer who does?"

"Otto says——" continued Fräulein Ina von Menzel—but her brother put his hand against her lips and protested with a laugh.

"Ina! *Um Gottes Willen!* Not so much of that 'Otto says', or Captain Gatières will think that I have been divulging our private conversations."

He pushed his sister into a chair and took his usual seat on the edge of the bed.

"Ina and I think very much on the same lines about everything," he said. "We believe in working for a new kind of world from which the old tribal hatreds have been banished."

We are all for peace between France and Germany—if France will give us any kind of chance.”

“Yes,” said Fräulein von Menzel. “But will France give us any kind of a chance? A most important question! The seizure of Düsseldorf does not suggest a hope in that direction.”

Gatières was hopeful.

“All these things are very temporary,” he said. “We must wait a few years before the memories of war on both sides begin to fade out.”

“That is reasonable,” said the girl. “I understand that. But it will be unfortunate if France creates new memories as bad as those of war in the German mind. We are yearning for a little generosity. I believe our people would respond to any generous gesture from France—something to ease our humiliation and our isolation. We dislike being branded as a criminal race.”

Otto von Menzel looked at his sister reproachfully.

“Ina! You are talking stuff which might come from Father. We don’t want to rake up grievances in Captain Gatières’ room. He is a friend. You may offend him.”

Gatières made a quick gesture of dissent.

“On the contrary. I am devoted to candour. I agree very much with what your sister says.”

Fräulein von Menzel expressed her regret if she had been indiscreet or provocative.

“Forgive me,” she said. “I was only expressing what I believe to be the truth. Otherwise there is no value in talking.”

“I am entirely of your opinion, *gnädiges Fräulein*,” said Gatières.

The girl left her chair and went over to the bed and sat beside her brother with an arm round his shoulder—a very charming picture, as Gatières thought: this brother and sister so like each other, so handsome, so youthful.

“Otto and I have very pleasant memories of Paris,” she

said. "We spent our childhood there. We learned to bowl hoops in the Luxembourg Gardens. I went to my first school at Passy. Is Paris much changed since the war?"

Armand Gatières admitted that Paris had changed. There was an American invasion. The Latin Quarter especially had been Americanized. And now tourist agencies were making a peepshow of the battlefields.

"Oh, that is horrible!" cried Ina von Menzel.

Presently she went over to see the portrait of herself in charcoal, as a schoolgirl with long plaits.

"Heinrich did that," she said. "Poor Heinrich! I think he would have been a great artist."

"He had wonderful talent," agreed Gatières.

Fräulein von Menzel looked into his eyes for a moment, thoughtfully.

"Otto tells me that your young brother also was killed."

"Alas, yes!"

She sighed deeply and stood with clasped hands beneath that portrait sketch.

"I could not bear to bring a child into the world," she said, "if I thought there would be another war one day."

She spoke with a great simplicity which moved Gatières very deeply. He answered gravely:

"It is for the young people of your age to prevent another war from happening."

"But we can do so little!" she cried. "The rulers of the world—the old men—have so much power. And we are at the mercy of world forces bearing down on us. Otto and I feel like babes in the wood surrounded by wolves and witches and evil spirits and devouring dragons. All we can do is to hold hands and pretend to feel brave, like Hansel and Gretel."

"My dear Ina," laughed Otto, "you are talking very foolishly this evening! I was hoping I should exhibit you as an intellectual lady with a considerable knowledge of French literature from Racine onwards. And here you are talking like a schoolgirl and saying all the wrong things!"

He turned to Gatières and apologized for his sister.

"Ina is talking nonsense because she is a little shy of you. Really she can talk quite sensibly. She is a great reader and she plays the piano like a professor. You must ask her to play Chopin one evening."

He was boyishly eager to show off this wonderful sister, who now laughed at him and put her fingers through his hair.

"Otto! It is you who are being foolish now. Since I have been a typist in a Berlin office my fingers are all thumbs. If I were to play Chopin I should be doing it in the style of a German business letter. 'Dear Sir, we have received your much esteemed letter of the tenth of this month.' Tapperty-tap-tap!"

"My sister," said Otto, ignoring this speech, "has also a voice worth hearing. She doesn't sing at all badly, I can assure you. Perhaps one evening we will have a little music up here. I will get Ina to sing some old songs to my accordion."

"A magnificent idea!" exclaimed Armand Gatières.

It was three evenings later when that little concert took place. Otto sloped into Gatières' room with his accordion and announced that Ina was coming up in a few minutes, as soon as she had said good night to her father and mother. As Gatières knew, they generally retired to rest at ten o'clock, and it was now about that time.

For a moment a slight apprehension crossed his mind.

"Your father and mother will not object to our having a little music in this room? I should not like to annoy them in any way."

Otto pooh-poohed the idea.

"Why should they mind? In any case they can't hear us. They are two floors down."

"It is, after all, my bedroom," said Gatières, smiling. "One has to think of the proprieties."

Otto raised his fair eyebrows and looked astonished.

"What are they? We are not living in the period of Martin Luther."



"That is true," said Gatières, good-humouredly.

Ina von Menzel appeared in an evening frock which Gatières thought was delicious. It revealed her white arms and was knee-short. She stood at the bedroom door like a *première danseuse* in a ballet scene.

"Am I permitted to enter?"

"We're waiting for you," said Otto impatiently. "Come in and shut that door. Are our honoured parents safely in bed?"

"At least safely behind the bedroom door!"

Armand Gatières was amused by this brother and sister who had come to his room with a sense of adventure when their parents were out of the way. It was a compliment to him, and he was enchanted with it, though there was still a little nagging thought in his mind that he might get into trouble with Herr von Menzel and his wife.

"We have been excessively bored this evening," said Ina. "My father was entertaining some very ponderous old gentlemen. The conversation was not amusing."

"*Gott in Himmel!*" groaned Otto. "I had to listen. I had even to be polite. These old men talk as though there is no hope for Germany or the world unless we return to the glorious old traditions of Frederick the Great. One of them denounced the Youth Movement in Germany as a mixture of hysteria and eroticism. My father agreed with him heartily, and was quite annoyed when I ventured to say, very politely, that the only hope of the world is in the comradeship of youth across the old frontiers."

Ina von Menzel laughed at her brother's claim to have been very polite.

"My dear Otto, you were abominably rude! You glared across at Herr Weisshaupt as though you wanted to bite him."

"I should hate to bite him," answered Otto. "It would be like biting an old boot."

Armand Gatières intervened in a discussion which was continued as a sham fight between this brother and sister.

"I understand we are going to have some music. You are going to sing to us, *gnädiges Fräulein*?"

Ina von Menzel denied that she was going to sing. Her voice, she said, had broken like a cuckoo's in July. It was the effect of *ersatz* food in Berlin.

"It is only in the occupied territory that one gets real food."

Gatières implored her to sing.

"I shall be vastly disappointed," he protested.

"Oh, you're only shamming, Ina," said her brother. "Not so many excuses, young woman. Show the French Army that we may have lost the war but we still keep our heritage of song."

He played some strains on his accordion and looked over at Ina with a smile.

"I will sing very softly," she told him. "After all, we do not want to arouse the household."

She sang very softly and very charmingly. She sang several of Schubert's songs, of which the most enchanting, to the mind of a French officer, was *Heidenröslein*. And then, as a compliment which he appreciated, she sang one of the old French chansons which had been made famous again by Yvette Guilbert. It was called *Tout doux, tout doux*.

"It is exquisite," said Captain Gatières. "This is a very great pleasure to me."

He was moved with emotion. It seemed to him wonderful and touching that this German girl should sing the old songs of France to the accompaniment of her brother sitting on his bed.

His mind travelled to his house in Avignon where his mother, perhaps at this very moment, was writing him a letter urging him to be severe with the German population and not to be duped by their alleged grievances. "They must be punished for all their crimes," she had written in one letter. "You are too chivalrous, my dear Armand. Chivalry is misplaced among a people who believe only in brutality."

The music lasted for an hour before Ina von Menzel reminded her brother that good beds awaited them.

"Oh, it's early yet," said Otto, who was enjoying himself and doing very well on his accordion.

Ina laughed and pulled his hair.

"I need my beauty sleep, and Captain Gatières must get some rest."

"Perhaps we may continue this pleasure another evening?" he suggested.

"With pleasure, if it doesn't weary you."

She held out her hand, and he bowed over it with sudden formality.

"*Bon soir*," she said. "*Dormez bien, monsieur !*"

## X

That young French officer, Philippe du Retail, was walking one morning down the Bischofstrasse with his friend Gatières when he was astonished, and even a little alarmed, to see a tall German, of sinister aspect, he thought, stop abruptly and stare at Captain Gatières searchingly and fixedly.

"There is some brute of a Boche glaring at you," he said quietly. "*Attention, mon capitaine !*"

He was even more astonished when Gatières gave a quick glance at the man and then went forward to him with outstretched hand and beaming eyes.

The two men talked excitedly, laughed heartily, and wrung each other's hand as though they were long-lost brothers. Other French officers, strolling down the Bischofstrasse, were surprised and displeased by this effusive greeting between one of their caste and a very tall and repulsive-looking German.

Gatières turned to Philippe du Retail and explained the situation.

"My dear Philippe, permit me to present Herr Gustav Hoffmann. But for his intervention at an awkward moment

during the war I should not have been alive to-day. And, in spite of pessimistic moments, I am glad to be alive to-day."

Philippe du Retail saluted stiffly. He was glad that Gatières was alive. He was a very charming fellow, although, definitely, too generous to the enemy. But not even for Gatières would he show any amiability to a Boche, still less to a Boche who was obviously a Jew.

Gatières remembered the time when he was taken prisoner.

"A German bayonet was within half an inch of my abdomen. I could see that the gentleman behind it had sentenced me to death. Intellectually I was already dead. But my friend here kicked up the bayonet in the very nick of time and was good enough to take me prisoner."

The tall German, now in civilian clothes, laughed heartily again and spoke in French with a strong guttural accent.

"It was good luck that I happened to be there. I was a *Feldwebel*—a sergeant-major. Now I am getting fat and have forgotten those war days. I have a good wife and two children in Düsseldorf, where I have a printing business."

"We must talk!" said Gatières. "It is not every day that I meet a man who has saved my life."

"I have an engagement with a friend," said Philippe du Retail. "Excuse me, Gatières."

He saluted again, and turned on his heel.

"Let us drink a glass of beer together," suggested Gatières to the tall German. "Perhaps even two glasses of beer."

He spoke in German, to the astonishment of Gustav Hoffmann.

"You speak German as well as that?"

"Better than that," boasted Gatières with a laugh. "I have been studying it intensively."

They sat opposite each other in a little restaurant near the cathedral and clinked glasses before they drank.

"*Prosit!*"

"It seems a thousand years sometimes—and at other times yesterday—since those days of blood and terror," said Gustav

Hoffmann. "I am beginning to forget the names of the places in which I was most frightened."

"It is almost the same with me," said Gatières, with a smile in his eyes. "But then I was frightened so often—at Verdun, on the Somme, on the Marne!"

Gustav Hoffmann glanced at the medals on the breast of the French officer.

"That is impossible! You have the Croix de Guerre with palms, and other decorations for valour. It is true that I had the Iron Cross of the second class, but one could hardly escape that without being shot for cowardice. I was, of course, a coward, but I succeeded in bluffing through. Perhaps because I was a Jew I had to pretend more than others."

Gatières sipped his German beer thoughtfully.

"That was extreme courage," he said, after shutting the lid of his beer-mug according to German etiquette. "It is the effort of will-power to hide one's fear which is most difficult, and perhaps most heroic."

Gustav Hoffmann penetrated his war-time psychology.

"There were moments in the war when I was actually paralysed with fear. It was a kind of shell-shock. I became rigid. I could not even turn my head. I sweated in the palms of the hands. I was just a lump of living terror."

"How could it be otherwise?" asked Gatières. "There are some experiences which are beyond the resistance of the human brain and beyond the control of human pride."

"I remember being in a billet somewhere on the Somme. It was, I think, at a place called Méricourt. It was the ruins of an old barn and not too uncomfortable. Better than a dug-out with its graveyard smell. I was playing cards with two young officers, and saw that they were nervous every time a shell passed overhead. They hadn't been at the front long enough to know the sound of shells and the difference between those on their way to other parts of the line and those requiring immediate anxiety. I became noisy over the cards, to put them at ease. I claimed a trick which wasn't mine, in order

to get up an argument. Suddenly a big shell arrived. I was perfectly aware that it was going to hit us. Something in my eyes gave me away to the lad who had protested against my claim to the last trick. I heard myself laughing, but it was on the wrong note, and I saw my own fear—abominable—in the eyes of that boy opposite. I held a card in my hand. It was the ace of spades. Whenever I see an ace of spades I remember the fear of death. I suppose all that took the thirtieth part of a second, or less, before the shell hit us. It was a five-point-nine."

"It made a mess?" asked Gustav Hoffmann, once *Feldwebel* of an infantry regiment.

"I was the only one left alive," said Gatières. "I was still holding the ace of spades when I came to my senses. I was quite unhurt, but we couldn't find more than a few odd bits of the two lads. High explosives are very freakish in their effect."

"Yes," said Hoffmann thoughtfully.

The two men stared at the polished table on which their beer-mugs had made two rings. There was a long silence between them. Their minds had gone back to the war years, to the places where they had been frightened, to the times when high explosives had destroyed the bodies of their friends. They were unaware that they were being watched by two German waiters, surprised by this friendly conversation between a French officer and a German Jew, and by a German girl who had been reading the illustrated papers.

It was Armand Gatières who was the first to come out of this silence.

"Sometimes," he said thoughtfully, "I am inclined to regret that you kicked up that bayonet."

"No, no!" said Gustav Hoffmann. "Why do you say that, sir?"

"It seems unfair to be alive when so many younger men were killed. And then, this Peace is—disappointing. The old hatreds still exist. Nothing is settled."



Gustav Hoffmann answered gravely.

"It is for us who saw the war to work so that living youth may know and understand and make some better plan of life."

Gatières looked into the eyes of this German Jew, a bald-headed man of middle age, ugly and vulturelike, except for those eyes, in which there was kindness.

"Is not that, perhaps, an illusion?" he asked. "Can there ever be peace between your people and mine?"

Gustav Hoffmann glanced round the restaurant and lowered his voice.

"I am a Jew as well as a German," he said. "I look at things from an international standpoint. I understand German character better than any German because I am in some ways an alien. At the present time they are suffering from defeated pride. They hide it, but they agonize. All their arrogance, all their belief in German might, all their pride in the past are overthrown and in the dust. Their old gods have been flung from the altars. They are bewildered and stricken in their souls. This Peace Treaty puts them behind bars through which they stare like caged beasts."

"One day they will try to escape," said Gatières. "It will be another war—and perhaps the end of civilization."

Gustav Hoffmann laughed harshly.

"Certainly the end! This civilization of ours is already strained and cracked. The cracks are widening. I am a Jew. I understand something of world finance and the machinery of money. The Capitalistic system is held together only by sticking-plaster. Every nation in the war exhausted its reserves of wealth. It mortgaged its future for generations ahead. I am convinced that there will be a collapse of credit, a breakdown of the financial system throughout the world. Then, perhaps, there will be a reign of anarchy such as history has never seen. The Allied Powers—England and France—believe, or pretend to believe, that they can pay for the costs of war by bleeding Germany to death. But if

they bleed Germany to death they will die of the same disease. If Germany becomes a stinking corpse there will be no health or wealth in Europe."

Gatières looked squarely again into the eyes of the man who had saved his life.

"And yet Germany ought to pay for part of the war. I speak as a French officer."

"I agree," said Gustav Hoffmann. "We are defeated. We must pay the penalties of defeat—to some extent. But not to an extent which will force us into ruin and despair. The reparations demanded by the Allies are fantastic and impossible. No such money exists in Germany, or in the world. It cannot be transferred. It is a mirage. Germany has already defaulted on the first payments. Now there are rumours that France will occupy the Ruhr to enforce these payments. In that case Germany will be less able to pay, and in that case France will create a new enmity which will be dangerous to herself in after years. I speak as a German. I speak as a Jew. I speak as a pacifist."

Presently he rose from the table and said that he must be getting back to Düsseldorf, where his wife would be wondering why he was late.

For a few moments the two men stood talking outside the restaurant. Hoffmann alluded again to his pacifism. He was about to start a paper under the name of *Der Friede—Peace*. He hoped to link it up with the Youth Movement in Germany. One day, perhaps, he might get in touch with French and English youth across the frontiers of hatred.

"That is the only hope!"

He took off his felt hat so that his bald head shone in the sunlight. His eyes, as Gatières had noticed, were kindly and spiritual.

"This has been a great pleasure to me," he said warmly. "One day, perhaps, you will allow me to write to you."

"I shall always be in your debt," answered Gatières. "And I admire your present work. It is worth doing."

Gustav Hoffmann laughed.

"As a Jew I am handicapped. Nevertheless, I shall go ahead. . . . *Auf Wiedersehen.*"

## XI

Colonel de la Prade was generous to his officers in the matter of leave, subject, of course, to the necessities of duty and the consent of his General on the Headquarters Staff. He was good enough to pass up the name of Captain Armand Gatières every six months or so, with occasional permission for short leave in Paris.

It was for Avignon and the surrounding country of Provence that the soul of this French officer yearned most. Paris did not satisfy his homesickness, though he was glad enough to pass a few days there, especially if he could induce his mother and sister to join him.

In Avignon that blustering wind, the mistral, so detested by foreign tourists, was to him like the breath of life. It blew the megrims out of his mind. It wafted away war memories and post-war anxieties. He found it rejuvenating. And yet each time he went back on leave his emotions were churned up again for a day or two at least, and he had moments of profound melancholy which he hid, or tried to hide, from his mother and sister. Some of them were inexplicable even to himself. He could not understand why a captain of Chasseurs, a hard fellow who had been through the war and seen frightful things, should suddenly find his eyes wet because a group of small children in a field below the broken bridge had crowned themselves with daisy-chains and were singing the old songs : "*Si j'étais le roi de France. . . .*"

"I am, perhaps, a little unwell," he thought, when he became aware of this weakness.

He was stirred by an extraordinary emotion when on his first leave from the occupied positions on the Rhine he crossed

over the river to Villeneuve-les-Avignon, and saw the old castle with its enormous towers, like a picture of an ogre's stronghold in a fairy-tale by Perrault.

"Why should this make me weep?" he asked himself. "I did not weep when my battalion was cut to pieces on the Somme. It is, no doubt, purely physical. I must be run down."

But it was, as he afterwards understood, the sharp reminder of happiness and boyish memories of beauty and romance contrasting with the nightmare which still haunted his mind. In Villeneuve-les-Avignon, that medieval castle with two round towers under the blue sky of Provence, and a portcullis over its gateway, and immense walls with slits for the arrows of French archers, he had played at being a knight, with boys of his own age and class. They had made cardboard casques with visors. He had been all the heroes of France in turn—Roland, Bayard, Bertrand du Guesclin, Dunois.

One of the old songs which he had sung as a boy came into his brain again, so that he found himself singing it :

"Partant pour la Syrie,  
Le brave et jeune Dunois  
Venait prier Marie  
De bénir ses exploits.

"O, faites, reine immortelle,  
Lui dit-il en partant,  
Que j'aime la plus belle,  
Et sois le plus vaillant !"

It was the beauty of France, the beauty of Provence, which melted his heart, so long frozen by ugliness, by despair, by the endless harvesting of death. This Provençal country was untouched outwardly by the war. No trenches had been dug across its fields. No barbed wire had made a spider's web in which to catch the bodies of poor human flies. No high explosives had ravaged this rich earth. With his mother and sister he made visits to Nîmes and Arles, and mingled with groups of American tourists in the Roman

amphitheatres still standing in magnificence after two thousand years of history. In France there had been an unbroken continuity of civilization. Alone he visited the ruined city of Les Baux, where once the princesses of Provence had held their Court of Love and crowned their favourite troubadours. He stood on the high rocks above the dusty plain with its grey olive trees, on the very terrace where the ladies had walked, looking across the country as far as the eye could reach.

A marvellous place of defence before the age of high explosives! But there had always been war. These hilltop towns into which he motored—he had bought a second-hand Citroën—had been eagles' nests from which the counts and barons of Savoie and Languedoc had descended with their fighting men—bloodthirsty rascals—to harry the lands of their enemies or to attack other castles on other crags. For more than a thousand years of history this country had been the battleground of Gauls and Latins and Franks and Huns and Saracens. Dynastic wars had recruited their armies from these towns. Religious wars had taken a toll of young life. Revolution had passed this way, choosing its victims—the noblest—for the guillotine.

"We are a fighting race. War has been our heritage," said Armand Gatières, standing on the highest peak of Les Baux and looking across a countryside drenched in beauty and somnolent, as it seemed, in everlasting peace. Somewhere, in a field below, a young peasant of Provence was playing his pipe and tabor, practising, perhaps, for the fête day in Vence, where there was to be a show of Provençal dancing to attract American and English visitors, who had invaded the French Riviera since the war.

Gatières listened to the tap of the drum and that old tune played on a pipe. It was traditional music, centuries old. Perhaps the ladies of Les Baux, in their steeple head-dresses, had heard the same old tune down there in the same field when Marguérite de Valois was Queen of France.

To a French officer three times wounded in a war which had lasted too long, a war of mechanism and high explosives, when human valour, the strength of manhood, counted for very little against the monstrous instruments of destruction—it was a spiritual refreshment to come back to this beauty, hardly touched by modern ugliness, and not at all, outwardly, by those four and a quarter years of carnage.

Not at all, outwardly, as far as nature went on from season to season, from harvest to harvest. The orange and lemon trees bore their golden fruit in the gardens of Avignon. The fields below the Palais des Papes, on the riverside, were sprinkled with gold and silver. Over in Tarascon and Beaucaire the wine-coloured bloom of bougainvillea was spilt down old walls. Further south, towards the Mediterranean, below the high ridge on which stood St. Paul, with its huddled houses and castle tower, there were forests of mimosa, flame-yellow. The white rocks of the Alpes Maritimes gleamed in sunshine under a blue and cloudless sky. A million billion crickets made a silvern and ceaseless music to a man who listened with his soul as he lay in the grass with his eyes shut and a smile about his lips.

*"C'est la paix !"* he said a hundred times. *"C'est la paix !"*

But there were reminders of war, painful, even in Avignon, and other towns of Provence—even in his own house. There was, for instance, the photograph of his young brother, Bertrand, on the piano in his mother's salon. She had had it put into a silver frame, and it faced him every evening when he sat on the sofa while his mother did her needlework and they talked together, or when Lucille was playing.

It was the face of a boy, so young that life had not yet hardened the line of the cheekbones nor given it the first modelling of manhood. He had not reached the military age, but had come out as a volunteer, like thousands of young men from the Lycées who had been mown down by machine-gun fire at Souchez and Neuville-St. Vaast in the first year of the war. In the photograph he was smiling,



just as Armand Gatières remembered him on that day when he had arrived as a second lieutenant, to be killed by a sniper's bullet in a thicket near Frise-sur-Somme. He had been delighted to join his brother. He had friends in the battalion. He was high-spirited and gay. He had the fine, fresh fearlessness of young soldiers whose nerve had not yet been broken by high explosives and the sight of the mutilated bodies of their friends. Then he had been killed, and Armand had knelt weeping by his body. It was painful to see that photograph on the piano.

And it was not always amusing to meet men whom he had known as comrades in the Lycée. Every day, when he came home on leave, he met one or two. There was, for instance, Louis Corbin, who had been his best friend before the war. They had gone sketching together. They had discussed life and art together. They had quarrelled once about a girl with whom they were both in love—little Odette Mangin, the daughter of one of the professors. Then they had laughed and made it up, when she scorned them both for the sake of a young ass named Gaston Cartier, whom they both regarded as contemptible. Gatières came face to face with him in one of those narrow streets which run down at the back of the Palais des Papes to the level of the Rhone.

*"Tiens ! C'est Louis ? Mon cher ami !"*

Armand Gatières had halted. He had called out those words of recognition and pleasure, and then had felt his own pallor and a sense of horror, and a pity which was like a knife in his heart.

This man—this dear friend—was blind and mutilated. His left arm had gone. His right foot had gone. He hung between crutches, and when he spoke his voice was tragic.

*"Qui est ça ? Je suis aveugle."*

*"C'est moi. Armand Gatières. Mon pauvre ami."*

They embraced each other with difficulty because of those crutches. Louis Corbin was aware that his friend's face was wet.

"*Ne pleures pas !*" he said. "*Il ne vaut pas la peine. C'est la vie, n'est-ce pas ? La vie—c'est une drôle de chose, n'est pas ?*"

He too wept out of his sightless eyes, just for a moment or two, at this meeting with an old comrade. Then he pretended to be philosophical and brave. He was indeed brave to make this pretence.

"Blindness is not much," he said. "I find my way about marvellously. I have the sense of hearing which develops every day. Then too I have an inner vision which I try to cultivate. I see beauty everywhere. Do you remember how we used to go about sketching, Armand ? I still have those pictures in my mind, and everything that I used to see without noticing it much. I see your face now. We used to think you were like D'Artagnan. Have you changed much ?"

He put out his hand and touched Armand's face, and Armand Gatières stood rigid. The touch of this blind man gave him a *frisson* of intense emotion.

"Your face has hardened a little, perhaps," said Louis Corbin. "I can feel the lines. That is only to be expected. But you are still a fine-looking fellow, *mon vieux*."

It was painful. It was tragic. Armand Gatières went home so distressed that he could hardly talk quietly to his mother that evening.

He spoke once with passion and anger.

"Why did God allow this war ? If there is a God—you believe in Him, *Maman* !—why didn't He intervene and show some pity for young manhood ?"

Madame Gatières answered quietly :

"He did intervene. Was not France victorious ? Did not justice prevail in the end ?"

Gatières sprang up and paced about the room.

"France victorious ! . . . Justice ! . . . I cannot look at it like that. . . . I rage at the villainy which caused this war—the infernal stupidity—the bloody cruelty."

Madame Gatières made another stitch in her embroidery.

"All that is true, Armand. The wickedness of the Germans can never be forgiven for having brought all this misery into the world. God is punishing them. France is the instrument of the divine vengeance."

Gatières raised his eyebrows incredulously.

"By inflicting sufferings upon children who weren't born when the war began? *Ma chère Maman!*"

Madame Gatières quoted a line from the Scriptures.

"The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children."

Armand protested against that hard saying.

"If that is God's justice, then it is more cruel than that of men."

Madame Gatières was hurt by his words.

"Armand! That is blasphemous."

He was sorry to have hurt her like that. He took her hand and kissed it.

"A thousand pardons, *Maman!* I say abominable things. It's because it's so difficult to find the truth, and the meaning of life. I am somewhat of a sceptic—alas!"

His mother held his hands and stroked one of them, and said quietly:

"My dear, I understand your difficulty. You have not yet recovered from the war and all its hardships. Its wounds are still in your mind. That is natural, and you must be patient with yourself. If only you would pray a little now and then!"

"You are a saint, *Maman,*" said Armand.

He decided not to argue with her about religion, not to be cynical about the faith which gave her a marvellous serenity, a wonderful resignation, even a spiritual happiness, though Bertrand had been killed—that handsome boy whom she had petted always.

"God has been kind in letting me keep you," she said.

Armand drew her close and kissed her forehead. He could not help thinking that if God had been kind in letting him live, then He had been unkind in letting so many die—

the only sons, the young husbands, the lovers of lonely women. How could one reconcile all that? But he did not express such thoughts. He must think these things out in the solitude of his own mind. . . . And, after all, he was home on leave, and France was aflame with beauty, and it was good to be alive.

He had an excellent companion when his sister Lucille came home from Paris, where, after the war, she had been working with some Russian ladies—the refugees of revolution—in a millinery establishment. She had seen the war in its tragic aspects close at hand in the hospital at Compiègne, but although she spoke of this experience sometimes with emotion—she had seen so much of death—it had left her strangely placid and cheerful, and even gay. Perhaps that was due partly to her engagement to the English officer, Major Marshall. She looked forward to marriage, and babies, and a charming home-life.

Gatières chaffed her sometimes for loving an Englishman.

"An intelligent girl like you ought to have married someone with brains! I am almost convinced that the English are brainless. Perhaps I exaggerate this deficiency."

Lucille smacked his hand.

"It is our French conceit which makes us imagine that we have the monopoly of intelligence. The English think more and speak less."

"But they are inarticulate, my child! And if they never express their thoughts one cannot tell what they are thinking. Surely it is no use thinking at all unless one can communicate one's wisdom to one's fellow beings?"

"My particular Englishman," said Lucille, "speaks to me quite a lot. I rather like the things he says."

"Tell me some of them," suggested Gatières indulgently.

She told him the less personal things which Major Arthur Marshall discussed with the lady of his love. He had a fine old house in Sussex to which one day he would take her.

It had sixty acres of land. He was fond of dogs and horses and trees and all living things. His house had been built in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

"But my dear Lucille," said Armand, "you are resigning yourself to a life of gloom. I can imagine that old house! It will be very draughty. It will be very dark. And every day, week after week, and month after month, it will be enveloped in fog. Because, as you know, there is no sun in England and the climate is horrible."

Lucille was not intimidated.

"That is a French illusion," she informed an unbelieving brother. "Arthur tells me that England has the most beautiful climate in the world. In summer it is exquisite."

Gatières could not believe words which destroyed everything he had heard of England.

"My dear Lucille," he protested, "I have met your Major Marshall. He is good-looking, I admit. I am prepared to believe that he will treat you honourably and refrain from beating you with one of his horsewhips. But I must confess that he proves himself to be a valiant liar. It is well known in France that England is a land of fog, impenetrably black."

Lucille did not take offence.

"You must come and stay with us in our English home," she told him. "Arthur will provide a blue sky and the glint of sun."

"*Pas possible!*" cried Armand, laughing at her.

They went for many expeditions together during these periods of leave. With Lucille in the second-hand Citroën, and a sketch-book on the back seat—he had become an impassioned painter in water-colours, seeking to capture some of this beauty—every day provided new hours of pleasure. It was hard to go back to Mainz for his duties as an officer in the Army of Occupation. He suffered damnably from homesickness, like a schoolboy at the end of the holidays.

## XII

After that first visit of Ina von Menzel to her father's house in Mainz during the French occupation, she came again from time to time at intervals of some months, as though her parents were reassured on the subject of her safety. Once Frau von Menzel spoke to Captain Gatières about her daughter with a somewhat embarrassing candour, but also in words which he could not resent.

"Ina writes to me that she is coming home again for a week, and asks me to give you her kind regards."

"That is charming of her," said Gatières sincerely. "You will be glad to see her again."

Frau von Menzel nodded.

"I hardly think there can be any danger."

"In what way?" asked Gatières.

Frau von Menzel hesitated, and then spoke again, with a slightly heightened colour.

"She is very young. She is also impulsive and generous-hearted. It is possible that some men might misinterpret her free ways of speech and her friendly behaviour—even to the enemies of her country."

"To a French officer like myself?" asked Gatières, with a good-natured smile.

"Exactly. . . . You know what I mean, I am sure. She likes talking to you for intellectual reasons. She also wishes to be courteous—and kind, even—to an officer who has been billeted here so long and for whom both her father and mother have a real respect."

Gatières bowed slightly, with his D'Artagnan smile.

"It is very generous of her, and of you, *gnädige Frau*. Let me assure you that I shall not misinterpret her good nature."

Frau von Menzel touched his hand for a moment as it lay on the arm of the plush-covered chair next to the sofa on which she sat.



"Forgive me for talking like this. But I feel that it is necessary, just for this once. You must be rather lonely here sometimes, and French officers after all are human."

"That is a very generous statement!" said Gatières with a laugh.

Frau von Menzel smiled slightly and then became serious again.

"If there were any danger of—foolishness," she said, "I should never allow my daughter to come home like this. But my husband and I rely entirely upon your honour and discretion."

"Thank you," said Gatières.

She seemed to expect some kind of pledge from him; a pact of security, to use a phrase afterwards familiar in the relations between France and Germany. He gave it frankly and sincerely, without a mental reservation.

"You need have no fear, *gnädige Frau*. I shall always behave to your daughter with respect and honour. I should like you to believe that French officers have, after all, a sense of honour."

"Some French officers," she agreed, rather stiffly, and then added less hostile words.

"My husband and I would be broken-hearted if any harm—any distress—came to our daughter through any carelessness of our own."

"Of course," said Gatières, "I understand that perfectly."

"That is all I wish to say," said Frau von Menzel, "and I am grateful to you for understanding a position which is, of course, delicate on both sides."

She held out her hand to him, and he bent over it. He liked this German lady, even though she hated France. He could understand her hostility to the French Army of Occupation. His mother had the same hatred for Germany and for all things German.

But after she had left him he smiled at her anxieties regarding her daughter. That young woman was perfectly

capable of looking after herself, should any French officer dare to try a little love-making. And, in his own case, such an idea had never entered his head. He was several years older than this girl. He limped on one leg because of a German bullet. To a girl like that he must seem a withered and unromantic man, uninteresting in any sentimental way. In any case he was not likely to get amorous with a German girl. The idea was alarming and absurd. His mother would never forgive him. And as for this girl's parents, they would rather see her dead than in love with a French officer. He wasn't going to risk troubles like that! Fortunately he was not tempted to do so. For Ina von Menzel he had the homage of a war-worn man for a fresh young thing who was good enough to talk to him now and then, and to discuss post-war problems with candour and intelligence. He was grateful to her also for the gift of music. It was like water to a parched soul when she played Chopin's melodies on the rosewood piano in her mother's drawing-room—a treat which he enjoyed when she came back from Berlin from time to time for a few days, and once for a few weeks.

## XIII

By degrees this French officer was admitted to the social life of this German household in which he was billeted. Heinrich von Menzel gave little dinner-parties now and then, to which Gatières was invited. They were somewhat wearisome, unless Fräulein Ina or her brother Otto happened to be present to liven up the conversation at Gatières' end of the table. The food was of a Spartan simplicity, and really hardly enough to satisfy the pangs of hunger, although the wine of pre-war vintage—some admirable Rudesheimer—made up for this deficiency. The company was not as a rule brilliant nor entertaining, and there was a certain heavy formality about these evenings which Gatières found rather

painful. His presence may have been partly responsible for this. He was aware of a sudden restraint and iciness in the demeanour of these German guests when he was presented to them for the first time, although that wore off a little when they had met him at this dinner-table more than once and were satisfied that he could listen courteously to their German grievances, even if he failed to agree with them. In any case they were pleased and astonished that he should speak German very well. Few French officers troubled to learn a language which they despised as a barbarous way of speech—another German grievance and cause of irritation.

Armand Gatières listened more than he talked at this dinner-table—unless Fräulein Ina or Otto sat next to him. He listened patiently to monologues from middle-aged men—distinguished citizens of Mainz—who still maintained their loyalty to the ex-Kaiser and despised the Republic of Ebert and Scheidemann. He listened to hostile commentaries—veiled by a frigid courtesy on account of his presence—on the French conviction that the Rhineland could be seduced from its allegiance to the Reich by French propaganda against Prussia and by the bribery of corrupt individuals who pretended to agree with this aim. They had a particular hatred of the French High Commissioner, M. Tirard, who had become a devotee of Rhineland independence and who spent vast sums of French money in subsidizing newspapers to prove that the Rhinelanders were of the same race as the French, and that historically they had no relationship in race or culture with the outer barbarians who were the Germanic tribes. He found his disciples for this gospel among the riff-raff of the Rhineland population, even in the prisons from which he liberated them on condition that they would attend meetings of this "Separatist" movement and raise the shout of "*Los von Berlin!*" They were ready to shout anything for a little food in their bellies. They were equally ready to assault the German police who attempted to break up these meetings because they infuriated

the rest of the population and led to disorderly outbreaks. French troops had been given orders not to interfere in these affairs, the result being that German policemen were kicked to death by groups of hooligans who called themselves Separatists.

"Captain Gatières will agree, I am sure," said one of Heinrich von Menzel's guests, "that this French policy of detaching the Rhineland is only consolidating the unity of all loyal Germans, and is contemptible in its lack of understanding."

The man who made that remark was the president of the most important bank in Mainz—a tall, distinguished-looking man with a perfectly bald head and a powerful, square-cut face, heavily puffed under the eyes, not unlike Bismarck in his middle-age. He glowered across the table at Armand Gatières and breathed heavily.

Gatières answered with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"As a French officer, I am hardly able to express a definite opinion."

Heinrich von Menzel intervened with his usual courtesy.

"My dear *Herr President*, you must not expect a French officer—our guest here—to denounce the policy of his own Government. That is going a little too far!"

The German banker breathed heavily again, and then bowed gravely.

"That is true. I apologize for my indiscretion."

"Let us avoid unpleasant subjects," said Heinrich von Menzel on another occasion when conversation became heated about the question of reparations—"a tribute," said one of the guests, "which binds the German people as slaves to the chariot wheels of France and England."

"Let us talk," he suggested, "of German art and literature, and of the influence of the Romanesque period upon the architecture of the so-called Dark Ages."

Fräulein Ina was at dinner that evening when her father made that suggestion for a theme of conversation.

"Papa," she cried with a laugh, "that is like the title of a lecture at Bonn. As a dinner-table topic I do not think it is very entertaining. Why go back as far as the Dark Ages?"

Heinrich von Menzel frowned at her across the table.

"In order to avoid the darkest age of all, which is here and now! One must look back because one dares not look forward."

"I agree," said a German General, who would have looked more imposing in his uniform, but even in a dinner-jacket was no mean figure of a man. "The glory of our German people lies in the past, and it is only by a remembrance of the mighty deeds of our German heroes that the spirit of the younger generation may be ennobled. This is a period of degradation. We are living through the years of shame. The heroic German Army was betrayed by pacifists and anarchists. We must clean ourselves from that filthy and poisonous taint. I would kill any Communist like a mad dog. A pacifist, in my judgment, is the same thing as a traitor, and I would have him shot without trial. Our gracious and exalted Kaiser . . ."

Ina von Menzel was sitting next to Captain Gatières. She leaned a little towards him and laughed quietly.

"One knows exactly what these old men are going to say. They have learnt it all by heart in the text-books."

Gatières smiled at her and agreed.

"Let us have a little conversation by ourselves," he suggested. "Tell me, what have you been doing lately?"

"Typing business letters in a Berlin office. Frightful drudgery!"

"But you amuse yourself in the evenings sometimes?"

"Always. That is the only compensation. I am very keen on dancing. There is a place—quite nice—along the Kurfurstendam. But it costs a lot of money for a typist girl. I go without lunch sometimes so that I can afford to dance. Don't tell my mother!"

"Isn't it unwise to starve yourself?" asked Gatières, like an elder brother.

"Man does not live by bread alone!"

"No, but one needs enough. Whom do you dance with?"

"Oh, good-looking young men!"

"Nicely behaved?"

"Charming—on the whole. Some of them are foolish, of course."

"In what way?"

Ina von Menzel laughed and answered quite frankly:

"They flirt a little. That's only natural, isn't it?"

"But you don't encourage them?"

Gatières asked the question with a smile. It occurred to him that those young Germans would not need much encouragement.

"I don't mind a kiss now and then. It's quite harmless. Of course none of these boys can afford to marry. I suppose in a way I'm rather a temptation to them."

"I dare say you may be," answered Gatières, disguising the amusement in his eyes. He could quite understand that this charming girl just in the springtime of womanhood might be a temptation to young men in Berlin.

"Some of them have irregular unions," she said. "They haven't the patience to wait for marriage, and things are so uncertain that they may be dead before they can afford a home. There is a good deal of free love among students and working girls."

"Does it work out all right?" asked Gatières seriously.

Ina von Menzel thought for a moment or two before answering that question. It didn't seem easy.

"I know many cases in which it works out all wrong. It seems to lead to tragedy. There are many suicides in Berlin among young people. Two of my friends gassed themselves the other day. The girl was going to have a baby. She couldn't afford it, of course. I suppose they were frightened."

"Very tragic," said Gatières gravely. "Poor children!"

Fräulein Ina nodded and lowered her voice when there was a pause in the conversation of her elders.

"In Berlin one sees a lot of tragedy. There is great poverty in the middle-class—and life seems bewildering. There is not much hope for the young people, and the old people have abandoned hope. They know that Germany can never pay the reparations or fulfil the Peace Treaty."

She looked up after a moment's silence and laughed.

"This is worse than the conversation about art in the Dark Ages. Let us talk about something pleasant."

"How is Otto?" asked Gatières.

Otto, she said, had found a job and hated it. He was in a motor business as a kind of salesman. It was not very profitable, but it was a joy having him in Berlin. They shared rooms in the Dorotheenstrasse. On Saturdays and Sundays they went to the Wannsee and bathed. In the evenings they danced together.

"Life has good moments, even now," she said.

"Spare me one of those moments," said Gatières. "Play a little music after dinner, if you could be so kind and generous."

She would not agree that it was generous. On the contrary, she thought it was kind of him to listen.

That evening she played for nearly an hour, while Gatières sat in a low chair near the piano. Beyond them was the buzz of conversation, the rasp of German gutturals. The General was describing the battle of Tannenberg. Frau von Menzel knitted while she followed the narrative. Her husband smoked a cigar thoughtfully.

Gatières glanced now and then at these German faces about him. There was no weakness in them. They belonged to a strong race which believed in strength. They liked the word *Stark*. They liked the word *Macht*. On the walls were portraits of Heinrich von Menzel's ancestors. They were the same type as some of these middle-aged men,



though wearing wigs and gowns and uniforms and orders. But some of their women were attractive. Over the piano was a portrait of Fräulein Ina's great-grandmother in the time of Metternich, with sloping shoulders and a delicate little face under a high coiffure. She had a merry look. There was something about the lips of that girl at the piano which had come down from that laughing lady.

"What is it you are playing, *gnädiges Fräulein*?" asked the General, when he had finished his narrative of the battle of Tannenberg.

"A reverie by Chopin," she told him.

He made odd noises in his throat, and then spluttered out a protest.

"Chopin. . . . A long-haired Pole, like that mountebank Paderewski. . . . Why do you not play some of our Bach or Beethoven?"

"With pleasure!" said Ina von Menzel.

She played one of Bach's minuets, and in the middle of it looked across at Gatières and smiled with a little grimace, as though to say, "That General is very fierce. I must humour him."

#### XIV

It was that time when she stayed three weeks that Gatières saw most of her. She recommended him some German novels to read, and discussed them afterwards. Once, after dinner, when the "old people", as she called them, were engaged in conversation with the Bishop of Mainz and one of his clergymen, she slipped out of the room and whispered to Gatières an invitation to join her in the library. He did so discreetly, after a slight interval, and found her deep in her father's most comfortable chair, smoking a cigarette.

"Is this perfectly in order?" asked Gatières. "Shan't I get into trouble about this evasion of social duty?"

Fräulein Ina laughed at his apprehension.

"I will take all the blame. The bishop is a dear old gentleman, but tedious. Light a cigarette, *mon capitaine*, and talk to me about life."

He lit a cigarette, but refused to talk about life.

"We might get on to painful topics," he explained. "Life is a subject so very controversial. Tell me about the theatre in Berlin. Have you seen any good plays lately?"

It appeared that most of the German plays in Berlin were extremely unpleasant. She wouldn't dare to take her mother to any one of them. They pandered to the lowest instincts of human nature.

"Tell me about Avignon," she asked in turn. "I would like to go there one day."

He told her quite a lot about Avignon and its history. He described some of the surrounding country and the little old hill-towns of Provence. He even recited a few verses of Mistral in the old Provençal language, still spoken by the peasants here and there.

He was astonished and alarmed when suddenly he looked at his wrist-watch and found it was eleven o'clock.

"*Ciel ! . . . C'est affreux ! J'ai parlé comme un babillard !*"

Ina had been curled up in her father's chair, listening to his monologue. Now she uncurled herself and was amused at his horror.

"I have enjoyed our conversation very much. Certainly I must go one day to Avignon, when Germans are allowed out of their cages."

"The guests are going," said Gatières nervously. "Your father will be coming into this room. He may be annoyed to find me here."

He could hear Herr von Menzel saying good-bye to his guests.

"*Auf Wiedersehen, meine Herrschaften. Gute Nacht. . . . Ich danke Ihnen vielmals. . . . Bitte, bitte !*"

"Why should he not find us here?" asked Fräulein Ina

calmly. "We have behaved in a most correct way, have we not? Serious conversation about French geography!"

She was teasing him. She could see that he was quite nervous.

"It is very simple," she assured him. "Father will only come in to turn out the light. I will save him the trouble."

She touched a button and turned out the light.

"*Gnädiges Fräulein!*" said Gatières, now thoroughly frightened. He would be in a most awkward position if Herr von Menzel should discover him in the dark with his daughter. It would be appalling.

"Hush!" said Fräulein Ina, with a little suppressed laugh.

A heavy footstep came down the hall. The door of the library was opened. Captain Gatières of the Chasseurs Alpins, a brave man by all reputation, felt his heart lurch with a sense of fear.

"*Das ist sonderbar!*" said the voice of Heinrich von Menzel.

He cleared his throat, muttered something, went out, and shut the door. His heavy footsteps went forward, and up the wooden stairs.

Fräulein Ina turned up the light.

"All is well!" she exclaimed.

Gatières saw her laughing eyes and the humorous mouth of her great-grandmother, but he looked grave, even a little stern.

"That was terribly indiscreet!" he said. "*Ciel!*"

Ina von Menzel laughed at him again.

"It saved unnecessary explanation," she answered. "Papa would have treated me like a naughty girl. Why wasn't I in bed? Why hadn't I remained with his guests? And so forth."

Gatières was not yet reassured.

"If he had turned up the light we should have looked extremely foolish," he said. "You would have put me into a very unpleasant position."

She held out her hand to him.

"I am sorry. . . . I am not yet grown up. *Entschuldigen Sie !*"

He held her hand for a moment and explained his fears.

"As a French officer, I have to be extremely circumspect. I am here on sufferance."

"An honoured guest !" she assured him, with a hint of mockery.

She raised her hand in friendly salute, like one of his own men, and with a laughing good night, slipped out of the room and went upstairs.

## XV

An alarming incident happened on her next visit to Mainz, three months after she had switched off the light in her father's library. It was more than alarming—it was stupefying to a captain of Chasseurs billeted in a German household and under a pledge of honour.

She had been home again for three days, and for one reason or another—partly because Gatières was kept late at Headquarters owing to the absence on leave of Colonel de la Prade—he had not seen her for more than a few minutes, and that as they met on the staircase.

She reproached him seriously.

"*Bon jour, mon capitaine.* I am Fräulein Ina von Menzel. You may have forgotten. Allow me to introduce myself."

He held her hand for a moment.

"I heard you were home. It is abominable that I have been kept late at the office. Fortunately my colonel comes back again to-night."

"Then perhaps we may have a little conversation—if you do not find it wearying to talk to a German girl without much sense in her head."

Armand Gatières answered her smile.

"A lady of extraordinary intelligence," he answered. "How is Otto?"

Otto, she said, desired to be remembered to him. He had lost his job in the motor business, and was looking for some new kind of work. He was rather miserable, and pessimistic about the state of Germany, which he thought was advancing steadily to ruin and collapse. Meanwhile he had fallen in love with a young woman in a florist's shop along the Kurfurstendam.

"Well, that ought to keep him cheerful," said Gatières. "My felicitations to him."

Ina von Menzel laughed and shook her head.

"On the contrary! Love exasperates him because he can't afford the luxury of marriage and the girl tries to push him off, having been well brought up, like myself, by good Catholic parents."

"Life is a difficult affair," said Gatières, as though announcing a newly discovered truth.

"One can hardly deny that, *mon capitaine*," agreed Fräulein Ina with mock gravity. "But when are we going to have that conversation about pleasant subjects like music and books and the beauty of Provence?"

He looked forward to having that conversation after dinner.

It was unfortunate that after dinner he was called into the library by Ina's father, who wished to show him some early printed books which he had bought in an old shop near the cathedral. They were certainly interesting. Captain Gatières would have been more interested in them if he had not been thinking all the time of that promised conversation with Fräulein Ina. She did not join them in the library because her presence was required in the drawing-room, where her mother was entertaining a lady who was staying in the house—an elderly aunt from Bonn.

"This binding is admirable," said Heinrich von Menzel, handling one of those early printed books. "We do not

produce such good work in this machine-made age. Look at this type. What dignity! And that margin! How noble! They were master craftsmen in those days."

"Magnificent!" said Gatières.

Through the heavy door he could hear the faint sound of a piano. Fräulein Ina was playing. It was disappointing that he could not listen to her. She had an exquisite touch. He had an idea that she was playing something by Schubert.

"I have always been a book collector in a modest way," said Heinrich von Menzel. "It is a hobby that distracts the mind from the worries of actuality. Once, in Paris, I picked up a wonderful bargain for a few sous. I would like to show it to you. An early copy of *Aucassin et Nicolette*."

It took some time to find. He had other treasures to show. Time slipped away and ate up the evening.

"A thousand thanks," said Gatières, rising, at half past ten, after a glance at his wrist-watch.

"Oh, it is early yet!" exclaimed Heinrich von Menzel. "In any case you must drink a glass of wine with me."

He brought out a tall-necked bottle—his precious Rudesheimer of a good year—and some fine old glasses still unbroken after two centuries in this house of Mainz.

"*À votre santé, mon cher capitaine!*"

He spoke for a moment of his pleasure in such a conversation with Gatières.

"After all," he said, "there need be no enmity between French and German minds if they are intelligent and interested in scholarship and culture. Unfortunately such minds are few. If you will allow me to say so without offence, they are not to be found very often among French staff officers and French politicians."

Gatières smiled and did not take offence.

"Or perhaps among German staff officers and German politicians."

"I agree! . . . That is equally true. . . . I am bound to admit that."

Heinrich von Menzel laughed with great good nature, and then groaned heavily with abrupt transition to gloomy thoughts.

"All the same, my poor Germany is in a bad way because of French *intransigence*. Your newspapers talk of imposing 'sanctions' because we have failed to fulfil the reparation clauses of the Treaty down to the last letter. 'Sanctions'. What does that mean? I cannot believe that France will occupy the Ruhr. It would be a mortal blow to German industry and life. It would prevent us from paying any reparations. It would inflame the hatred of the whole people."

Gatières shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Newspaper talk!" he said. "Those journalists! I do not believe a word of all that. It is inconceivable."

Heinrich von Menzel looked relieved.

"I am glad to hear you say so. I am very broad-minded, as you know. I have an admiration for French intelligence—in spite of everything. But, frankly, I should be enraged—I should lose my self-control—I should abandon all regard for France, if such an outrage were committed upon German pride and industry."

"It won't happen," said Gatières calmly. "It is a *canard* in the Press. They scribble this stuff in the Café Napolitain."

"That is true," agreed Heinrich von Menzel. "Journalism is one of the curses of the modern world. I think the devil is a newspaper proprietor with his head office in Paris."

"That seems to me a good theory," said Gatières, with amusement. "But with branch offices in Berlin. He is an internationalist, this *Monsieur le Diable*."

He heard Fräulein Ina laughing in the hall outside. She was taking the old lady up to bed. That promised conversation would be unfulfilled.

"*Gute Nacht und besten Dank.*"

It was past eleven when he left the library, waiting for a moment while Herr von Menzel switched off the light.



They went upstairs together, and parted on the first landing. Ina's father went into his bedroom, with a last friendly word to the French officer. On the second landing Gatières found Ina waiting for him.

"We have not yet had that conversation," she said in a low voice. "There is a conspiracy against us. Old ladies! Old books! I am very much disappointed."

"I am desolated," said Gatières, smiling up at her as he stood on a lower stair.

"Are you very sleepy?" she asked. "Are you craving for a feather bed?"

"Not in the least," he assured her. "But the household has retired. All lights out."

Ina von Menzel did not regard that as an insuperable difficulty.

"Modern civilization has some advantages," she said. "In one second all lights will be on. I invite you into my father's library. I insist upon a little intelligent conversation."

For a second Gatières hesitated, and he felt again that sense of fear—at least, of apprehension—which had disturbed him on her last visit when, in a spirit of fun, she had switched out the light. Now she was going to switch it on. It might be dangerous. On the other hand, it would be very pleasant to have that intelligent conversation. And everybody else had gone to bed. There was no likelihood of anyone coming down again.

"For five minutes?" he asked.

"For fifteen minutes," she said firmly.

He held out his hand to her with a quiet laugh and she came down the broad stairs with him after switching on the light. She was wearing a white evening frock with short sleeves. Her bare arm touched his shoulder as they went downstairs, and he was aware of a slight thrill running up his own arm in a curiously electric way.

He opened the library door and waited while she switched on the other light.

"What a reek!" she exclaimed. "Papa's cigars are really abominable."

"Shall I leave the door open?" asked Gatières.

She desired him to shut the door.

"Now we can talk," she said. "I will take the comfortable chair, with the usual selfishness of the female creature."

"What shall we talk about?" asked Gatières, rather nervously.

"Everything!" she said. "I haven't seen you for three months. How is your mother? How is your sister? What books have you been reading? How have you been amusing yourself? What do you think of M. Briand? What is going to happen to civilization? Are we all going to be Bolshevized like Russia? Have you been very bored with Papa's monologue on early printed books?"

He did not answer all those questions. In fifteen minutes there was not much time to answer even one of them—at least one of such importance as the future of civilization.

They wasted some time in parrying question and answer, and then in a trivial argument about a new maid who had come to replace a girl sent away for laziness. Fräulein Ina said the new maid had a beautiful figure, like a Greek goddess. Captain Gatières said he had not noticed the fact. Fräulein Ina said he must be unobservant of beauty. Captain Gatières said that on the contrary he had a quick eye for beauty.

"We are talking nonsense," said Fräulein Ina. "Let us be serious. In any case I wish to smoke a cigarette."

Gatières had exhausted his packet of *Gauloises bleues*. He searched round for the cigarette-box which this girl's father kept for his guests. Fräulein Ina helped him to look for it.

"No luck!" said Gatières. "You will have to go without that cigarette. Anyhow, those fifteen minutes have gone. It is time for you to go to bed."

"You think so? You are tired of talking?"

She looked at him with a smile in which there was a kind of shyness.

"I am not tired of talking," he answered. "But, honestly, I am a little nervous about staying down here too long. I can't forget that time when your father opened the door and you switched off the light and we were hiding in the darkness. I was terribly frightened."

She seemed amused.

"Are you easily frightened?"

"Very easily. I am a coward."

"I am going to frighten you now," she said.

She came towards him with a strange smile in her eyes, and her hands held out to him.

"I have a confession to make," she told him. "I am extremely in love with you. I have always been, since I first saw you."

Armand Gatières, captain of Chasseurs, was a very human person, not naturally ascetic, not immune from the desires of manhood, not without romantic sensibilities. He had been very lonely in this exile. His asceticism had been imposed upon him by the lack of feminine companionship in this occupied territory where women's glances were unfriendly and where his code of honour prevented intimate association with any German women who were not so hostile to French officers because they were undernourished or loose in their morality. This girl of good family, this charming Ina von Menzel, had been the only one to give him the favour of her friendship, and in her absence—for months at a time—he had missed her companionship.

She had put her hands on his shoulders. She was looking up into his eyes, and by an irresistible attraction, his arms slipped about her slim body and his head drooped, and he kissed her with a sudden passion.

Her hands went to the back of his head and she held it tight. She was drooping in his arms. Presently—he did not know how time went—she murmured little phrases in French.

*"Mon cher ami! Mon très cher Armand. Je t'aime. Tu*

*es français, mais je t'aime. . . . Je suis allemande, mais je t'aime. Il n'y a pas de frontières dans l'amour. Pas de politique ! Tout c'est idiot quand on aime. Et je t'aime, mon cher capitaine de Chasseurs. Mon D'Artagnan !*"

It was perhaps two minutes, or ten, or twenty—he did not know how time went—before he became very frightened.

He still held her in his arms, but jerked his head back, and spoke like a frightened man.

"Ina ! . . . My dear child. . . . What are we doing ? . . . This is terrible ! . . . This is appalling ! I have given my word of honour. I pledged myself to your mother. She has trusted my good faith."

"*Mon cher Armand !*" said Ina. "*Mon D'Artagnan des Mousquetaires. Embrasses moi.*"

He kissed her again for two seconds, or two minutes—he did not know how time went. Then he spoke again with fear in his voice.

*"Gnädiges Fräulein ! Ich bin verrückt. Dies ist nicht möglich. Wir müssen es nicht thun. Ich bitte um Verzeihung."*

He said he was mad. It was impossible. He begged her to pardon him.

She held his Croix de Guerre and lifted it to her lips, and said amazing words.

"A German girl kisses a French war medal. It is a symbolical act. See, I kiss it again ! It is a kiss of peace between our souls—French and German."

Armand Gatières had tears in his eyes. He was enormously and profoundly moved. But he was also very much alarmed.

"My dear child ! You mustn't love me. I cannot allow you to love me. I cannot allow myself to love you or to kiss you."

He kissed her again.

"Say that you love me," asked Ina von Menzel.

"I am a French officer," he reminded her. He repeated those words, lest she did not know that he was a French officer.

"That is true," she answered, smiling up at him. "You are a French officer. I do not deny it."

"You are the daughter of Heinrich von Menzel," he said.

She did not deny that either.

"Your father would kill me if he saw me now, with my arms round you, kissing you."

He kissed her again.

"Are you afraid of my father?" she asked.

He admitted that he was exceedingly afraid.

He was even more afraid of her mother.

"I am afraid of nothing," she told him. "My love for you gives me complete courage."

Armand Gatières held her away from him. He was unaware how tightly he had held her in his arms.

"I am conscience-stricken," he said. "I gave my word of honour. Your father and mother believe in me as a man of honour. I implore you not to let me embrace you like this. I am committing a crime."

"You are giving me very much pleasure," said Ina von Menzel.

She laughed into his eyes, so grave, so frightened, in spite of his badge of courage, that Croix de Guerre, with palms.

"My dear child," he said again, "don't you understand? We dare not love each other. It would destroy your happiness. Your people would think it treachery and degradation. My people would not be kind to you. There is a frontier of hatred between us. My young brother was killed in the war. My mother was his mother, and she cannot forget."

"My young brother was killed in the war," said Ina. "I loved him very much. Now I love you very much. We do not belong to that old world of war. We belong to a new world in which youth will make peace."

"If that were true!" cried Armand Gatières.

"Let us make it true," said Ina. "You and me and Otto, and others of our age."

He answered dolefully :

"We have no power. Even now I am afraid the old men are arranging new stupidities."

Ina caressed his hand.

"Don't let them make victims of us," she said. "Don't let them spoil youth and love. Say that you love me, *Monsieur le Capitaine D'Artagnan !*"

He would not say that he loved her, though he clasped her in his arms again, making a noise in his throat which was half a groan and half a sob.

"This is a tragedy !" he exclaimed.

She told him she was on fire with happiness.

Presently—he did not know how time went—he released her from his arms, and walked away from her, not looking at her.

"You must not love me," he said. "It will lead to tragedy. I have told you that. I implore you to be discreet. You see, I gave my word of honour to your mother, and in any case you are a child and I am a war veteran. I limp with one leg. I am scarred with wounds. It is ridiculous that you should love me. I cannot believe it."

"It is true," said Ina quietly. "I love you, Armand. And you have held me in your arms. And I know that I am loved."

He kissed one of her bare arms, and then her fingertips.

"We mustn't stay here any longer," he told her. "It is too dangerous. Let me take you up to your room. Please. Allow me to insist !"

"It's exquisite in this room," she protested. "It will be so lonely in my own room."

"Come," he said. "My dear child ! I am afraid."

"Of what ?" she asked, entwining her fingers with his.

"Of myself. Of you. I have a conscience. I wish to keep a word of honour."

"What is all this about honour ?" she asked. "Is there any dishonour in my love for you ?"

"Your father and mother will think so. They will accuse me of bad behaviour—unpardonable. Let me take you to your room, *gnädiges Fräulein*."

She allowed herself to be led upstairs, and he was alarmed again when she laughed as they reached the first landing because they were in darkness and he could not find the switch of the electric light.

"For heaven's sake !" he whispered. "Your father and mother . . ."

Her father and mother were only a few yards away in their bedroom.

"This darkness is delicious," she answered. "Let me hold you tight or I shall lose you."

She clasped his arm and laid her cheek against his face.

She was kind enough to find the switch for him, and he saw the laughter in her eyes when the light flooded the landing with its polished boards.

They had another floor to go. The old stairs creaked abominably under Gatières' boots, and at every creak Ina tried, and failed, to suppress her laughter.

"This is worse than war !" thought Gatières.

She stood at her bedroom door and spoke in a low voice.

"You know that I love you ? Did I tell you that ? Do you remember ?"

"I shall always remember," he said.

"You are glad ?"

"I am frightened. I am a French officer."

"You are my lover," she told him, as though that answered all questions.

He held her in his arms again, and she tried not to let him go. But he drew himself away and went upstairs to his own room, and for an hour or more sat on the edge of his bed, thinking out this thing that had happened to him. It was exquisite and it was tragic. It was a temptation beyond his strength to resist. He was desperately in need of love, and Ina von Menzel offered him her beauty, her charm,



her loveliness. But what was going to happen? Supposing he took her to Avignon, what would his mother say? What chance of happiness would she have among his people? What would her father and mother say if they found out this love-affair with an officer of the French Army occupying Mainz? He knew what they would say. They would accuse him of having betrayed his honour. They would charge him with being the usual kind of blackguard who had tried to seduce their daughter, against his pledged word, after all their friendship and courtesy.

Once he groaned loudly in a kind of agony, and went to the window and leaned his head against the window-sash, staring out at the roofs of Mainz and the pinnacles and carved stonework of the old cathedral, touched by moonlight.

## XVI

It was astonishing that they did not betray themselves. Ina revealed her love in her eyes and took no trouble to conceal it. It was only Gatières who was craven and secretive. He hardly dared look at her at her father's dinner-table because she sent him instantly a message of love. Over her music on the piano when she played she searched for his eyes and spoke to him across the room with her spirit and her beauty. Sometimes he trembled lest her mother or father should intercept one of those silent messages, but they were unobservant—Heinrich von Menzel absorbed in his own talk about the political situation, which was very menacing, and Frau von Menzel listening to ~~her~~ <sup>his</sup> man as she knitted in her usual chair with her back to the piano.

Ina took risks of the most fearful kind light-heartedly. Every evening she came into his room before dinner, when her mother was dressing, and went straight into his arms, even with the door open. Several times, when her parents had gone up to bed, she crept down to the library to meet

him there, and talked late into the night, generally curled up on the floor while he sat in her father's deep chair, with her head against his knees. It was always difficult to persuade her to go to bed. It was always more difficult to leave her at her bedroom door.

He suffered agonies of temptation, of conscience, or fear, and yet could not resist the ecstasy of her companionship and caresses. She was in a way a child, and he had the tenderness of manhood for her childishness. And yet she was thoughtful, when she was inclined to speak of serious things, and amazingly mature in her intelligence and knowledge, with a candour of speech which sometimes abashed him. Now and then they did talk of serious things—the strange phenomenon of love, the mysterious affinity between two souls, the divine right of manhood and womanhood to fulfil a passionate desire for union in spite of social caste or racial difference. One night she reminded him that they were in the same dilemma as Romeo and Juliet, tortured and divided by the old feuds between their houses.

"It's incredible," she said, "that humanity has not advanced since then. It is just as cruel to youth. It is just as stupid in its hatreds. Because I am German and you are French we are afraid—at least you are afraid—of confessing our love from the housetops."

"You make me feel like a coward," he answered. "Tell me that you also are just a little afraid."

She admitted that it would need courage to tell her secret to her father and mother. Perhaps it would be better to conceal it for a little time. There was no hurry, after all. No one could tell what was going to happen in the future. She would have to go back to Berlin in a few days. Her holiday was coming to an end. And Otto needed her.

"I shall weep when I go," she told him. "I am weeping a little even now, at the thought of going."

That was true. There was a sudden rush of tears to her eyes, and she drew his head down and held it against her face.

In a few days she was going back to Berlin. That thought was like a shadow creeping nearer. Even her mother remarked upon her mournfulness when there were only two more evenings at home.

"My dearest child, you look very sad this evening ! What is the matter ?"

"I hate the idea of going back to Berlin, Mother."

"You never used to. I thought you were so devoted to your work. In any case you will have Otto with you again. That is a compensation for leaving home."

"All the same, I am sad."

Only two more evenings with the adventure of stealing down to the library when the household had gone to bed, and giving herself to the embraces of a French officer who vowed that he dare not embrace her, who was very much afraid to kiss her, before he took that offer of her lips.

It was sad for both of them that one of the evenings was spoilt by the arrival of an orderly at dinner-time with a message from Headquarters saying that Captain Gatières' presence was requested instantly by Colonel de la Prade.

"No bad news, I hope ?" said Heinrich von Menzel when Gatières excused himself and rose from the table.

"Some trivial affair," answered Gatières. "Some report wanted in Paris, to be pigeon-holed unread when it arrives. You know the appetite of government officials to fill up their pigeon-holes."

"It is a German habit as well," agreed von Menzel, with a laugh.

Gatières passed Ina's chair.

"Don't be back too late," she said. "I am going to play the piano, and I like a sympathetic audience."

"Ina, my dear !" cried Frau von Menzel, with a reproving smile. "What nonsense you talk ! You must not order Captain Gatières about like that."

"I am entirely at her service," said Gatières with a good pretence of French gallantry.

He was back late. It was more than a trivial matter at Headquarters, as he knew at once by the gravity of Colonel de la Prade and several other officers already assembled before his arrival. Among them were Philippe du Retail and his friend Meyer, the official interpreter.

Gatières saluted and took a chair.

Colonel de la Prade twisted his white moustaches and nodded to him.

"Urgent orders from Paris, Gatières. We shall all have to get busy. A grave situation."

"Of what nature?" asked Gatières. He had a sense of sickness at the pit of his stomach due to the gloomiest apprehensions.

Colonel de la Prade shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"The General wishes to talk to us himself. I need not anticipate his remarks."

The General entered at this moment, and nodded to the officers, who rose at his entrance.

"Take your seats, gentlemen."

He lit a cigarette and put it carefully into an ivory tube, and then stood with his back to the window—a stocky figure with cavalry legs and the head of a Breton peasant, weather-beaten and lined.

"Well, gentlemen," he said in his gruff, explosive voice, "we shall have some new kind of work to do, but at least it will be interesting and something in the nature of an unknown adventure. Owing to the default of the German Government to deliver reparations and to fulfil the Peace Treaty, the French Government has decided to occupy the Ruhr. As M. Briand has remarked to a French journalist in Paris, according to the dispatches I have just received, when one deals with a wilful debtor it is necessary to put the bailiffs in. As French officers we are not politicians—*Dieu soit merci*!—but it is our duty to carry out orders, and in this case our orders are to occupy Essen and other towns, peacefully if possible, but otherwise with ruthless suppression of any

resistance. In case of riots and mob violence our machine-guns will deal with the situation. In case of the passive resistance of German labourers refusing to work under French orders, it will be our task to break down this spirit, by persuasion if possible, and otherwise by severe ordinances. Any officials instigating disobedience to such orders will be arrested and imprisoned. Any irregular fighting or sniping will be dealt with as in time of war. Civil administrators, engineers, and so forth will handle the situation generally in this network of German industry, in order to obtain deliveries of coal and other supplies as laid down by the Peace Treaty. That is, of course, outside our domain. We merely extend the military occupation. Our duties remain military. Colonel de la Prade will give you more detailed instructions as far as this section of the Intelligence is concerned. German-speaking officers are especially required, and I understand that several of you have that qualification, which, I must say, seems to me remarkable considering the difficulties of that atrocious language! Well, gentlemen, that is all I have to say. You will accompany the first cavalry brigades who will move into their new positions at dawn to-morrow. The news is bound to be known to-night by the civilian population here in Mainz and elsewhere, as it has been published in the French Press, with its usual indiscretion. But I do not anticipate trouble in this city, which has a healthy respect for French discipline and order."

He flicked the ash from his cigarette and cleared his throat.

There was silence among this group of officers. Meyer, the Headquarters Interpreter, looked across at Gatières and made a slight grimace, as though to say, "An ugly job. I don't like it."

Gatières didn't like it. It seemed to him profoundly regrettable. He was convinced that, from the French point of view, it was an error of the first magnitude. What could they do in the Ruhr—that vast spider's web of machinery and

industry? How could French engineers get the clue to that maze of mechanism? How could French bayonets force German labourers to work if they decided not to work? And in any case, how could France exact reparations from Germany if they destroyed Germany's means of payment?

He had discussed this question with Heinrich von Menzel and other Germans, when the possibility of occupying the Ruhr was first mooted as a sanction against German default. They had assured him that the German nation would be brought to ruin and inevitable collapse if such a thing happened. It might open the gates wide to Bolshevism and anarchy. They were certain that the Ruhr workers would never move a step, turn a wheel, run a train, or shovel out a piece of coal under the threat of French bayonets. The idea had enraged them. Heinrich von Menzel, a liberal-minded man, had vowed that if a single French soldier stepped into the Ruhr there would be such a flame of hatred throughout Germany that it would burn in the German spirit even though they had to wait a century for revenge. It was a political blunder. It might lead to another world tragedy. It was the wrong way, thought Armand Gatières, of healing the wounds of war and advancing towards security and peace.

But he sat there, silent and thoughtful, among his brother officers. . . . For a few moments he forgot his surroundings and did not hear the words spoken by Colonel de la Prade. He was thinking of Ina von Menzel. What would she say when he told her that he was under orders to invade the Ruhr? She had kissed his Croix de Guerre one night. She had told him that he and Otto and herself would work for peace. "We do not belong to that old world of war," she had said. "We belong to a new world in which youth will make peace." Now he was going into the Ruhr to make war again.

Because that is what it would be. War against unarmed men who would be shot down if they tried to resist. There

would be ugly incidents, inevitably. There would be arrests and imprisonments and executions. French soldiers would be called on to enforce the orders of politicians in Paris, ignorant of the situation on the spot, ruthless of human agony and despair, because it would be German agony and German despair. He hated the idea.

Colonel de la Prade asked a question.

"And the English, *mon Général*? They will advance from Cologne in step with us?"

The General laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"*Ces sacrés Anglais!* They will not advance. They disapprove of this affair lest it should hurt the feelings of their friends the Boches. Another proof of the Entente Cordiale! Another demonstration of loyalty to France!"

He spoke bitterly, and there was a glint of contempt and anger in his eyes.

"From a political point of view it is regrettable," said Colonel de la Prade. "But these English are inexplicable. Their minds—if they have any minds—work on strange lines. They do not understand our French logic."

"They are true to tradition," answered the General savagely. "*Perfide Albion!* That is our old name for them. They have not altered."

He stayed talking for another half-hour. Armand Gatières was entirely unconscious of the wisdom which may have fallen from the General's lips, but sat rigid, staring at the panelled wall, absorbed in his own thoughts.

Ina! She would be waiting up for him. She would invite him into her father's library when the household had gone to bed. She would hold out her arms to him and he would be unable to resist her beauty. He ought to resist. He was ashamed of this weakness which overcame him in her presence. It was a violation of the pledge he had given to her mother. In any case it would lead to great unhappiness for her. How could he take her to Avignon? His own mother would look upon it with horror. His friends



in Avignon would be icy cold to her. She would be among a people who hated her people. Not even love could make up for such hostility. His German wife! They would be cut off from all society. She would come to detest life in Avignon—provincial-minded, narrow, steeped in intolerance, already refusing any concessions to Germany.

It would be a blackguardly thing to take advantage of her love, her spiritual courage to face anything for love's sake, her belief in the comradeship of youth making peace across the frontiers of hate.

He was getting deeply involved. Every time he put his arms about her he was yielding to a temptation which would end in tragedy for both of them. And yet he knew that when he went back to that house in the Bischofstrasse he would put his arms around her again. Perhaps it would be better not to go back to that house in the Bischofstrasse until she became tired of waiting up for him. This was the last night. Early next morning he would be on his way to Essen for that grim adventure.

The General went back to his own room, with a few last words to the officers, who stood up when he showed signs of going. Armand Gatières could not avoid conversation with Meyer, who was excited about this advance into the Ruhr and made no secret of his belief that it was an expedition into the infernal regions.

"I know those men of the Ruhr," he said. "They're a sullen crowd. Some of us are going to get stabbed in the back in dark streets, or kicked to death on railway sidings. Extremely unpleasant. I don't look forward to it."

Armand Gatières shrugged his shoulders.

"It looks like asking for trouble," he agreed. "But then we are not politicians, *mon vieux*."

Meyer arranged to pick him up in a staff car at half past four in the morning. He would bring Sergeant Michel along to deal with his kit.

"I shall be there," said Gatières.

He left Headquarters and paced the streets of Mainz, with that idea of going back too late to see Ina alone. He would have to be up at dawn. He would leave a letter for her—a letter which would be difficult to write. . . .

Already the news of the advance into the Ruhr must have reached the civilian population. In spite of French orders against gathering in crowds, there were small groups of men and women in some of the courtyards, talking in low voices, excitedly. A patrol of cavalry in steel helmets rode past the cathedral. The military police had been strengthened and were pacing the deserted streets.

Captain Gatières was saluted by them as he walked at a quick pace away from the direction of his billet, until suddenly he swung round and walked at a quicker pace back again, straight for the house of Heinrich von Menzel.

It would be cowardly, dastardly, he thought, to go away without a word to that girl who was waiting for him. To sneak off at dawn, to get lost in the labyrinth of the Ruhr, perhaps to get killed there as Meyer had foreseen, by a stab in the back, without another word, one last embrace, from a girl who had given him her heart—that would be unforgivable. No! He couldn't be as brutal as that, even though his brutality would be for her sake, for her future happiness. She was very young. She would forget him easily when some German lover came along. She would remember him only as a vague figure in a romance of girlhood.

## XVII

She was waiting up for him. It was still early when he let himself into the house with the key which he had used so often after late nights at Headquarters. She heard the sound of it in the lock and came out into the hall when he opened the door.

"Armand! This is terrible news! *Mon pauvre petit capitaine!*"

She stood there, rather pale, and there was no laughter in her eyes.

"You have heard?" he asked.

She knew that the French were going into the Ruhr. A telephone message had come for her father. He was terribly distressed. He had gone up to his room an hour before the usual time. Her mother had tried to calm him down. They were afraid he was going to have a stroke. For a few minutes he had been speechless.

"I am sorry," said Gatières. "It is enormously regrettable. I loathe the idea of it. I have to leave at dawn to-morrow."

She had not guessed that he was going with the advance troops. That had not entered her head, and she turned very white, as though struck by a blow.

"Armand! You are going? At dawn? Oh no! I cannot believe that!"

"I am under orders," he said gently.

She stood for a moment with her hands clasped, and then suddenly began to weep.

He strode towards her and put his arms about her.

"Ina, my dear child! Courage! Courage!"

She stifled her sobs and let him lead her into the library, which was still lighted.

"Armand!" she cried. "You mustn't go! I still have another night at home. If you go I shall lose you. I believe frightful things will happen in the Ruhr."

He was almost sure that frightful things would happen in the Ruhr, but he did not allow his mind to dwell on them. His only concern now was to comfort this girl.

"I lived through the war," he reminded her. "I dare say I shall live through the Ruhr. After all, it is not a military adventure. It will be the same as in Mainz."

She shook her head.

"It is different. It will lead to the ruin of Germany. Papa says it will lead to starvation and despair for all of us."

She put her head against his chest and one of her arms slipped round his shoulder.

"Armand, I am a German girl, you know. I can't pretend to take sides with the French in this affair. If I didn't love you so much I should be angry. France is mad to go into the Ruhr."

"Yes," said Gatières. "It is a madness. I agree."

"It is wicked," said Ina von Menzel. "Say you think it is wicked, Armand."

"It is a step into the dark," he said, "and beyond the darkness God knows what fires will be lighted."

"It is our last night here," said Ina, forgetting about the Ruhr now that this remembrance came to her again. She caught hold of his shoulder-belt, and he felt her tears against his cheek.

"I have loved our love," she said. "I shall always remember these happy hours, our talks about life—and books, and music, and everything. I frightened you when I first told you of my love. D'Artagnan was frightened!"

"Very frightened," said Gatières.

She laughed, with the tears still on her lashes.

"I was a temptation to you, was I not?"

Gatières could not deny it.

"You are still a temptation, my dear child!"

"But you have the soul of honour. That is why I love you. You are timid and shy and kind. I feel safe with you."

"You think too well of me," he answered. "I am just like other men. I am just a French soldier."

"But you do not hate the Germans," she said. "That is wonderful! And I think you love me a little, though I have done all the love-making!"

He denied that. He held her very close to his chest.

They were silent for a few minutes, and then she raised her head and looked into his eyes.

"Armand, I am afraid!"

"Why?" he asked.

"I am afraid that this is the last time I shall have your arms round me."

"That's an absurd idea!" he protested. "There is no reason for it. I shall come back quite soon. You will come to Avignon with me one day. We will make our home there."

She raised her face to look into his eyes.

"That would be good!" she said. "But they won't like a German girl in Avignon. Your mother won't like you to have a German wife."

He knew that was true. He had thought so a thousand times.

"Have you the courage to come with me?" he asked.

"Anywhere! But not if it meant your unhappiness."

Her courage was put to the test at that moment. It was when he was kissing her again that the door opened and her father stood there. They were unaware of him until he spoke harshly.

*"Schweinehund! Unverschämter Mensch!"*

Armand Gatières let his arms drop to his sides, and he turned very pale. Ina stood close to him and clasped his right hand and held it tight.

Heinrich von Menzel spoke in German, which he seldom used in speaking to Gatières.

"You have betrayed our trust in you. We believed you to be a gentleman, in spite of being a French officer. I perceive that you are a scoundrel, like all those swine who are going to invade the Ruhr and to outrage justice and all decency."

Armand Gatières was unable to defend himself. He was speechless. He looked guilty of dishonour. It was Ina who defended him.

"Father, you need not be angry. I love Captain Gatières. I have made love to him. Is there any harm in that?"

Heinrich von Menzel made queer noises in his throat. His hands were clenched as though he struggled for self-control. There was a terrible look in his eyes.

"Go to your room," he said at last. "You are shameless."

Ina still held Gatières' hand. She held it more tightly.

"Father, there is no shame to admit. Our love has been very innocent."

Her father took a step nearer to her.

"Don't speak to me," he said. "Don't make me more angry. I may say something—terrible."

"Father!"

She was frightened by the passion of his anger. It seemed to make him ill, as though inflicting physical pain.

"*Mein Herr*," said Gatières, "I have the honour to assure you that I have done no harm to your daughter. She has been very kind to me. I——"

Heinrich von Menzel staggered a little, thrust out both his hands, and fell sideways and twisted to the floor.

Ina gave a scream and ran towards him. Gatières held him in his arms and raised his head. He had had a stroke of some kind. He was the first victim of the advance to the Ruhr, followed by this shock about his daughter. The household was up all night. A doctor came. Frau von Menzel was deeply distressed.

Up in his room, packing hastily, Gatières could hear footsteps and voices on the floor below. The servants had been awakened. With the help of one of these he had carried Herr von Menzel upstairs. Now he had his own business to do, destroying papers, stuffing clothes into his kit-bag, emptying his drawers. He had a certainty that he would never return to this billet in Mainz where he had been so long and now and then not unhappy. He had been happy in the friendship of Otto and Ina, until friendship had changed to passion because Ina had scared him by her declaration of love. He had never been quite happy after that, though he had a sense of ecstasy for uncounted moments, with this girl in his arms. He was sad that he would not be remembered in friendship by Heinrich von Menzel and his wife, for whom he had had deep liking and respect. They would hate him now, if Herr

von Menzel's mind would ever be capable of hate again. When he had fallen twisted like that, Gatières had been horrified lest he were dead.

In that confusion of the night, when the doctor had come and servants were scurrying about with frightened looks, Ina had spoken to him once before he went to his room.

"I will say good-bye to you. When must you go?"

He told her the hour. It was half past four. He would be fetched in a staff car.

She came to his room a few minutes before the time and tapped at his door. She looked white and worn.

"Father is very bad," she said. "Oh, Armand, I am afraid I have killed him. When he saw me in your arms he had a horror in his eyes."

"He didn't understand," said Gatières.

"No, he didn't understand. He belongs to the old world—suspicious of youth—afraid of love."

She held out her hands to him and asked a question which affected him deeply.

"Are we ever going to meet again in life?"

"Yes! Yes! In a week or two. At the most in a month or two. I shall think of you always."

"Remember me a little," she pleaded. "I love you so very much. I am sorry I frightened you, *mon cher D'Artagnan*!"

She smiled again, with a brave attempt at courage, and then wept, as he held her in his arms, very tenderly, with pity in which now there was no passion, because of that stricken man downstairs, and the grief of parting.

There was the sound of a motor-horn in the street below. It was Meyer with the staff car.

"It is time for me to go," he said in a broken voice.

She clasped him very tight. Her forehead was pressed against his Croix de Guerre.

There was the sound of heavy footsteps coming upstairs. It was his orderly coming for his kit.



"*Auf Wiedersehen !*" he whispered. "*Auf glücklichsten Wiedersehen !*"

"*Adieu, Armand,*" she whispered. "*Que Dieu te bénisse, pour toujours !*"

He lifted both her hands and put them to his lips.

There was a knock at the door. It was Sergeant Michel, come to fetch his kit.

"*Au revoir, mon capitaine,*" said Ina von Menzel.

"*Au revoir, chère mademoiselle, et merci mille fois.*"

Before Sergeant Michel they played the game.

The streets of Mainz were still in darkness when Armand Gatières took his seat in a staff car on the way to Essen. He had a knife in his heart. At least it felt like that.

### XVIII

The advance into the Ruhr had a sinister resemblance to war. Beyond Düsseldorf, where the dark streets were still deserted except for French sentries, the staff car, in which Gatières sat very silent next to Lieutenant Meyer, was held up by the baggage wagons and field-kitchens of the 4th Cavalry Division. They pulled to one side of the road at the shrieking of a klaxon horn, and ahead of them there was an unbroken line of troopers in steel casques. They rode slowly, with carbines slung, and there was a jingle of bits and bridles and the creaking of saddles and stirrup-leathers as Gatières had heard so often in dark nights of war on the way to frightful places where death was busy.

As dawn came with a grey light they rode through the villages between Düsseldorf and Essen. Houses and cottages were already being chalked up for billets. There was the sharp, acrid smell of field-kitchens where groups of infantry were bivouacked with stacked rifles. Armoured cars and tanks crawled along the roads on their caterpillar tracks. Machine-gun sections were taking up positions at the cross-

roads. Further ahead battalions of infantry marched steadily towards the strongholds of German industry and their headquarters in Essen. Here and there by the side of the road stood groups of men and women. The men were miners in their working clothes. They were sallow-faced, haggard-looking men, and they stared at the French troops silently, but with a look of smouldering anger on every face.

Lieutenant Meyer spoke for the first time since leaving Mainz.

"These are the men we shall have to deal with. I can't see them working under French orders. As obstinate as mules, and they don't look as though they loved us!"

Gatières sighed and did not answer.

Two minutes later Meyer spoke again.

"I don't like this war in peace time, *mon capitaine*. I was rather hoping I had seen the end of war. Now I'm going to be frightened again. This is an advance into hell, in my opinion. 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.' As far as we are concerned, that is written over the factory gates of Essen."

Gatières took advantage of a halt behind some gun wagons to light a cigarette. It was the first he had smoked since saying good-bye to Ina von Menzel.

Lieutenant Meyer became talkative.

"It's absurd to think that French clerks and engineers will be able to handle this network of steel and iron—this spider's web of railways, mines, and machines. Beyond Essen there are Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund, and Bochum. This *Ruhrgebiet*, as they call it, is an infernal region of mechanized power worked by five million black devils who know all its clues, and all its wheels and gadgets. Of course, if they're kind enough to show us the way about and initiate us into the mysteries, all will be well. But I can't see them doing it. If I were a German, I would sit tight and do nothing."

"I wouldn't say so too loudly, my friend," said Gatières rather grimly. He agreed with Lieutenant Meyer, but he felt very disagreeable.

Lieutenant Meyer did not notice his friend's ill-humour.

"This is a fool's errand, *mon capitaine*. It is, to my mind, regrettable that M. Poincaré has embarked upon this adventure. It is to exact reparations from the Germans, but if they adopt a policy of passive resistance there will be less chance of getting the deliveries of coal, and we shall drive Germany into anarchy and Communism. I don't see how that is going to benefit us. The English are wise in shirking this expedition. Don't you agree?"

"We have to carry out our orders," said Gatières. "French officers have to do what they are told, and it's not part of their duty to discuss politics."

He spoke with a rasping voice, which was so unlike his usual manner that Lieutenant Meyer turned to glance at him with raised eyebrows. His face was white and drawn. There was an extreme melancholy in his eyes.

His parting from Ina von Menzel after her father had been stricken down had left him shaken and with all his nerves on edge. This advance into the Ruhr filled him with the gloomiest apprehensions. He regretted that he had survived the war. Those comrades who had fallen on the field of honour were perhaps, after all, the lucky ones, he thought, in this grey dawn on the outskirts of Essen.

Lieutenant Meyer spoke good-humouredly. "You look a bit blue, my dear Gatières. A cup of coffee presently will be very acceptable."

"The fact is," said Gatières, with a kind of apology for his bad temper, "this adventure does not amuse me at all."

Meyer laughed at this expression.

"No, it is not amusing! Unless one is amused by the folly of one's fellow men."

He quoted a Latin tag: "*Quem deus perdere vult, prius dementat.*"

"Very likely," said Gatières dryly.

They were in Essen. It was a considerable town with many big buildings and long streets of ugly houses for the

factory workers and miners. Every shop was closed and shuttered, as a demonstration of hostility to this occupation. Crowds of workers were in the streets, staring with those sullen eyes which Gatières had observed in the villages. They were the same type of men, sallow-faced and haggard. They had an undernourished look after years of poor rations and *ersatz* food. The women were thin and gaunt, and showed less restraint than their menfolk. Some of them were weeping silently. Others spat out words of fury as the French cavalry passed them.

In the small *Platz* opposite the *Rathhaus* there was a dense mass of civilians behind a hollow square of French infantry, and as the staff car in which Gatières and Meyer had driven up stopped on the edge of the crowd, a score of bugles sounded the salute to a French General who rode into the square with his staff. It was General Rampon, commanding the troops in Essen.

One of the aides-de-camp came to the side of the staff car and spoke to Lieutenant Meyer.

"You're wanted, *mon vieux*. The General is about to talk to the *sacré Bürgermeister*. Needless to say the old man doesn't know a word of German. You're just in time."

Gatières waited while Meyer performed his first duty as interpreter in Essen. There seemed to be some hitch. The *Bürgermeister* was not at the *Rathhaus*. He had to be fetched. It was twenty minutes before he appeared, to the great annoyance of the General on a restless horse.

Gatières overheard the comments of the crowd nearest to him, unaware that he knew German.

"These swine think they can coerce our workers by bayonets and machine-guns ! They have made a mistake."

"We have suffered too much already in the war and afterwards. Now we must go through another agony."

"It is for Germany. Nothing else matters."

"Our men will starve to death before they surrender."

"It isn't pleasant to starve to death !"

Gatières glanced at this group of men whose words he overheard. They were not of the working class, but men of social standing—perhaps managers of departments or directors of business firms in Essen. One of them met his eyes and whispered something to his companions—a warning, no doubt, that this French officer might understand German. They elbowed their way farther from his car.

Over the heads of the crowd Gatières saw the General go up the steps of the *Rathhaus* with some of his officers. They returned after a few minutes. Meyer came back to the car.

"What happened?" asked Gatières.

Meyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing much. The General announced that he had occupied Essen and that the region of the Ruhr was under French administration. The *Bürgermeister* was polite but chilly. I must say he behaved with complete self-possession and dignity. He made a formal protest against the use of military force among a disarmed and defenceless population. The General saluted and retired. Essen is ours, and now, *mon capitaine*, for a cup of coffee before we find our billet."

There was a coffee-house at the corner of the *Rathhaus* Square, but the waiters, it seemed, were too much engaged in private conversation to serve French officers. It needed the sight of a French revolver before one of them decided to accept the order.

"*Mon capitaine*," said Lieutenant Meyer, "this sojourning in the Ruhr is not going to be amusing, as you have remarked. I should prefer to spend a few months at Deauville. I have an uneasy feeling that we are not popular in Essen."

Gatières rewarded these remarks by a faint smile. It seemed an immensely long time since he had held a weeping girl in his arms. Was it a few hours ago, or a few years ago? Now he was in Essen, drinking coffee and glad of it, as one of that army in the Ruhr which would be cursed the length and breadth of Germany. Yes, he needed that cup of coffee. Strange that a hot drink should comfort the soul of a man

and make life more endurable, and dull the sharp edge of agony. It was *ersatz* coffee, and filthy stuff.

## XIX

The occupation of the Ruhr was not in the least amusing to anyone concerned, except, perhaps, to some of the younger French officers who had a certain amount of satisfaction in asserting their authority over these sullen Germans, and thrashing them now and then if they dared to be insolent or disorderly. There were incidents of that kind which did not sweeten the situation.

Some young hooligans who had raised menacing cries against a group of these younger officers took refuge in a theatre, and the whole audience was dispersed by French riding-whips, which did not distinguish between the guilty and the innocent. In the back streets there were fights now and then between French soldiers and gangs of young ruffians, the sons of Ruhr miners, who asked for trouble and certainly received it. These incidents were accidental, and due to the temper of French officers and men annoyed by insults or signs of hostility.

For the first few weeks the policy of the French administration was as conciliatory as possible, in the hope that the officials and workers of the Ruhr would recognize the necessity of yielding to *force majeure*. It was a vain hope. At the first threat of the Ruhr invasion all the books, ledgers, plans, and figures giving any clue to the working of the mines and railways had been removed beyond reach of French inspection. This maze of the German industrial machine was a labyrinth without a guide. Railway directors and mine managers denied all information, and refused to issue any orders to their staffs in order to fulfil French commands. On the contrary, they had issued a general instruction that no work was to be carried out for deliveries of coal or for the running of trucks under French orders.

These instructions were obeyed to the letter by the civilian population, who adopted a passive resistance complete and obstinate. Instantly on the appearance of a French officer with a company of infantry at any section of this network of railways, the stationmaster or traffic manager refused to carry on his service, and his men stood around him impassive and sullen. Men went down into the mines as usual, but produced no coal except for their own purpose, which was to send it through to unoccupied Germany by trains and lines not yet discovered by French engineers and officers. For several weeks, even for a few months, there was this coal-running by night, in spite of French vigilance, until finally it was stopped by the tearing up of rails and the smashing of points. Lorry loads of coal ran the gauntlet of French sentries, and German drivers risked the bullets which tried to stop them in the impenetrable darkness of railway sidings where no light gleamed at night because the lamps were smashed.

French nerves were on edge after the first few weeks of this resistance. Conciliation and persuasion had failed to work. Very well, then, it was necessary to try coercion and severity. Any German official or worker refusing to function was subject to arrest and imprisonment. Any director of works inciting his men to passive resistance would be heavily fined. Thousands of railway men were arrested at a moment's notice, ordered to pack up their traps and depart from their homes and families into unoccupied territory. Every day groups of these men—tall, middle-aged men with a certain dignity of their own—marched as prisoners under a guard of French infantry with fixed bayonets, while German women—their wives and daughters—wept on the sidewalks. Their going left a wilderness where once there had been a busy traffic of trains, in this vast area from which all Germany had received its raw material.

French engineers paced the lines, examined the points and signal-boxes, made little maps, and knew that they were lost in a tangle not to be unravelled. Those German swine



refused to run a train? Very well, then, it was necessary to run them with French drivers. That sounded easy to distinguished gentlemen from Paris, conferring with high officials at Headquarters or dining very comfortably in the Kaiserhof at Essen. It was not at all easy to anxious experts, standing in the middle of this spider's web of steel and wondering what would happen to a French troop train which was on its way from Düsseldorf.

Unpleasant things happened. Trains were derailed and French soldiers had their legs and arms broken. There were collisions where lines crossed, and signal-boxes had failed to function. French infantry began to show extreme reluctance to railway transport. Their officers shared their uneasiness. The word "sabotage"—an ugly word—was heard along the ranks of men waiting to be entrained. It put their nerves more on edge. French sentries standing between the tracks at night in this abomination of desolation, where endless lines converged, heard sudden explosions in the darkness and fired in the direction of that noise. They strained their eyes and saw, or thought they saw, dark figures crawling between the tracks. They fired again. French officers sent out patrols into this No-Man's-Land, and discovered that points had been smashed and signal wires cut. Presently came the shriek of an engine and a long truck-train loaded with coal rushed past them in the darkness. It was one of those pirate trains taking coal to unoccupied Germany. It was futile to follow it with bursts of machine-gun fire.

French nerves were on edge. Sinister things were happening among five million civilians cut off from the rest of Germany, underfed, resentful of the presence of French troops. Haggard men were inciting them to revolt and violence. It was a breeding-place of Communism, no more favourable to German industrialists than to their French masters. Shops were smashed and looted by starving men. Shots were fired in dark streets, where French patrols found the writhing body of some poor devil who died as they bent over him.

Now and then a stray shot passed over their own heads. Now and then a French soldier was hit by a bullet not meant for him, perhaps, but just as unpleasant as though it had been.

France was not getting one per cent of the deliveries of coal which had been received before the occupation of the Ruhr. In Paris M. Poincaré was getting annoyed. He had staked his reputation on this adventure. It was necessary to break down this passive resistance of German brutes. They were still getting their wages paid. The German Government was subsidizing them by pouring in paper money—more and more of it, as it became worth less and less. The German banks of the Ruhr must be seized. That tide of paper money must be checked. This could be done by imposing heavy fines on cities and town councils where the inhabitants had disobeyed French regulations or incited the population to disorder by boycotting French troops in shops and restaurants.

There was no lack of opportunity. Punitive expeditions set forth to Bochum, Gelsenkirchen, and other places in the Ruhr. The troops were accompanied by tanks and machine-gun units. French officers entered the town councils, arrested the *Bürgermeisters* and councillors, and seized masses of paper money in the banks and post-offices. Civilians were stopped in the streets and relieved of their wallets. If they resisted, they were flogged with riding-whips by French officers whose tempers were frayed.

It was not easy to keep placid in this region of the Ruhr, where every French uniform was the symbol of a hated régime bearing down upon the lives of undernourished men and wan women. It was a nervous strain on French soldiers, to walk about streets where every pair of eyes was filled with hatred, to enter shops where the assistants turned their backs and refused to serve, to go into billets where the owners regarded them as beasts and would never answer with a civil word.

The German police were ordered to salute French officers. They failed to salute. If any trouble arose between angry

mobs and isolated Frenchmen, they strolled up side streets until the Frenchman was kicked to death or badly beaten. They disappeared like ghosts when shops were looted, or when a French officer ordered them to arrest a German. They disappeared from the scene entirely when the whole police force in the Ruhr was arrested and deported by order of the Commander in Chief of the Army of Occupation.

The *Bürgermeisters* were ordered to raise another police force from the civilian population. They regretted their inability to do so. No civilian would volunteer. Any civilian who volunteered would sentence himself to death by the vengeance of the crowd. There was no police protection in the Ruhr at a time when hunger was driving men desperate, when Communism was making fresh converts, and when criminal instincts were unleashed by lack of discipline. There was an epidemic of burglaries, assaults, and shoplifting. French sentries were startled by shrieks ringing out at night, and by the smashing of shutters behind which shopkeepers had barricaded themselves. As soon as dusk fell all inhabitants had to remain indoors, and earlier than dusk if their district were being punished for boycotting or "sabotage". There was no chance of gaiety for French soldiers off duty for a time in deserted streets where the shops were shut and where, when darkness fell, a skulking figure fled at the sound of their footsteps, or a shot rang out when some sentry called halt to a man who ran fast unless a bullet stopped him dead.

"*Et ma mère croit que je m'amuse !*" . . . "And my mother thinks I am amusing myself !" said the French soldiers at intervals. It was their catchword for the Occupation of the Ruhr.

It put their nerves on edge.

## XX

Captain Gatières was given a billet in a house near the Kaiserhof Hotel, and there were other officers quartered there,

including Lieutenant Meyer. Sergeant Michel had a small room next to that of Gatières, and intruded upon that officer's privacy from time to time for conversational purposes, with due respect.

He had views on the situation in the Ruhr. It was annoying, for example, to a man who loved amorous dalliance, as he did not deny, that the German women in Essen would not give him a civil word.

"Nothing but hatred in their eyes, *mon capitaine*, although life without women is like bread without wine. It is annoying. This life in Essen is abominable !"

"I advise you not to mess about with any German girl," said Captain Gatières. "It's a dangerous pastime, *mon vieux*. You may find yourself with a knife in the back one evening."

He spoke seriously, knowing the weakness of this sergeant who had been with him at Verdun and through the war.

"They are on the lean side here in Essen," said Sergeant Michel. "They do not attract me. All the same, I respect them. They are not afraid of having big families. France is dwindling away, *mon capitaine*. More deaths than births. Soon we shall be in the soup—when all these boy babies are old enough to fight us."

"That, perhaps, is why we are here," said Captain Gatières insincerely. "To prevent them from arming again. Isn't that the idea ?"

He didn't agree with that idea. He was utterly opposed to it. But it interested him to hear the views of this sergeant, who was a bit of a philosopher and not without intelligence.

Sergeant Michel breathed heavily on his officer's belt, which he was polishing as a devotional act.

"No good," he answered. "We can do that for five years, ten years, perhaps even twenty years, with a little luck. After that the War of Revenge, *mon capitaine*—and France without allies. A charming prospect for the fathers of families !"

He was a queer fellow, this sergeant, with leanings towards

Socialism—before the war he had been a follower of Jaurés—and a cynical contempt for French politicians. He was a realist and stared facts in the face and spat on them, as it were, in argumentative moods, especially when they were disguised by the optimism of the French Press. Every day he read the *Matin*, two days old when it arrived at Essen, with a kind of savage contempt which he expressed to his officer.

"All goes well in the Ruhr!" That is the headline in to-day's paper, *mon capitaine*. 'German resistance is weakening.' 'The railway service is assured.' 'The coal deliveries are excellent.' . . . *Cré nom!* If I had that journalist here I would wring his neck. He writes from a café on the Boulevard des Italiens, with a glass of vermouth at his elbow."

Captain Gatières nodded slightly, and offered his packet of *Gauloises bleues* to this loquacious fellow, whose conversation, after all, was more amusing than brooding thoughts in a room overlooking the factory chimneys of Essen. He was not far wrong, this fellow. That optimistic stuff in the French newspapers was eyewash for the people in Paris. After two months the French *Régie* in the Ruhr had definitely failed in breaking down this passive resistance. All they had done so far was to put a monkey-wrench into the machinery of German life. German money had gone bad. The whole nation was on the verge of ruin.

Sergeant Michel seemed to read his thoughts as he stared out of the window at that dreary prospect.

"Without doubt, *mon capitaine*, we are on the edge of a volcano. . . . *Permettez moi!*"

He struck a match to light his cigarette, and asked a question while the match still burned.

"Do you know what is being manufactured—wholesale—by German miners who refuse to pick coal in the presence of French bayonets?"

"Tell me," said Gatières.

Sergeant Michel burnt his fingers with the match.

"Hate," he said. "Hotter than this blasted flame."

Hatred against France. When I walk through Essen I can feel the fire of it scorching me from the eyes of German girls whom I would like to kiss—though they are scraggy, I confess—because they're women, and I'm a man, and human nature is human nature, *mon capitaine*."

"That is true," said Gatières dryly. He knew it from personal experience, which had left him shaken. It was a logical statement, that.

"This hatred," continued Sergeant Michel, swallowing the smoke of his cigarette, "I can feel it flaring up in the heads of these square-skulled swine standing like dumb beasts at street corners and watching me with slant eyes as I pass in the uniform of France. They look tame enough, eh? Well, they're getting hungry. No meat, not enough potatoes. No fats for their stomachs. Precious little milk for their squalling babes. Nothing but rage gnawing at their guts, because of French fines, orders, imprisonings, expulsions, requisitions, and riding-whips. Hunger makes beasts of men—wild, tearing beasts. I know because I've been hungry—in the Place Clichy. One day they will break out to find a way of escape. They'll start killing each other—and their own slave-drivers—the profiteers, the shopkeepers, the big industrial folk. Then there'll be hell all round here, and it won't be a joke altogether for French soldiers in lonely machine-gun posts, or French sentinels at street corners, or staff officers and their orderlies in German billets. No joke at all, *mon capitaine*!"

Gatières looked at Sergeant Michel with a quick glance. He knew the courage of this man. He had seen him at Verdun, but there was a look of something like fear in his eyes. Or was it that his nerves were on edge because of living in a hostile population without a girl to kiss.

"You're getting morbid, Michel," he said sharply.

"No!" said Sergeant Michel. "But I see with sharp eyes, and I have a little pity for these German swine. I am a democrat, *mon capitaine*, as I have told you sometimes. I believe in the common people of the world—their right to

live and get the fruit of their labours for their women and brats. Even Germans, perhaps, have a right to live. If we deny them that, we're asking for trouble later on. People will die fighting rather than die starving. I'm of that opinion."

He spat out the fag-end of his cigarette and then crushed it under his heel on the bare boards.

Captain Gatières shrugged his shoulders and spoke with a slight irony.

"Your opinion is dangerous, *mon vieux*. Let me advise you not to blab it abroad too much. Opinions of that kind are the privilege of politicians in Paris and not of sergeants in the Army of the Ruhr."

Sergeant Michel was contemptuous, as far as respect allowed.

"Politicians in Paris! *Je m'en f*—. While they're arranging the ruin of the world, you and I, *mon capitaine*, men who have fought for France, have to do this dirty work, without women, without love, without amusement. If I had the misfortune of being the President of the French Republic—"

Gatières interrupted him with a laugh.

"My dear Michel, heaven forbid that such misfortunes should ever come to you! Meanwhile I wish to do some work, if you please."

Sergeant Michel knew his place. He saluted according to the best tradition of the Chasseurs Alpains.

"At your service, *mon capitaine*."

He hesitated for a moment before leaving the room, and permitted himself a few more words.

"There is a wench downstairs who is not too unfriendly. Her name is Greta, if I'm not mistaken. She is admirable in regard to fried potatoes, which are a weakness of mine."

Gatières jerked his head up over a book he was reading.

"I advise you to leave her alone."

"It is perhaps useful to learn a few words of German," said Sergeant Michel thoughtfully.



He saluted again and left his officer in peace, or at least in quietude. There was at this time no peace in the heart of Armand Gatières. He had written twice to Ina von Menzel, but no answer had come back. It was possible, he thought, that her mother had destroyed his letters. On the other hand, she might have decided that it was dangerous, or unwise, to write to a French officer attached to the Army of the Ruhr.

## XXI

Their nerves were on edge in the Ruhr. It was the reason, no doubt, why a body of French troops opened fire on a hostile crowd outside the factory gates of Krupp's, in Essen. A machine-gun detachment had been sent to commandeer a number of lorries and cars for the use of the Army of Occupation. The shriek of sirens was a signal for all the factory hands to cease work. They swarmed out into the narrow street and surrounded the French detachment, with menacing shouts and insults. The officer in charge was alarmed. It was no joke for his small company of men, outnumbered by thousands of angry civilians. The very weight of the crowd seething with passion might overwhelm them at any moment. They might all be kicked to death. They were young fellows, and he could see that they were getting nervous. He was getting nervous himself. He shouted to this German crowd, but they jeered at him. "*Allez-vous-en ! Cré nom de Dieu !*" They pressed closer. Men were shaking their fists, and all shouting in their German gutturals. The French officer spoke to his sergeant. "*Il faut faire quelque chose. Ce n'est pas amusant.*"

It was not amusing when at last he gave the order to fire, and when the sharp tattoo of machine-guns echoed back from the factory walls. The crowd fled in panic, trampling each other down, thrusting and pushing to get away from the line of fire. It was a devilish pandemonium, followed by sudden

silence in an empty street, where fifteen men lay dead and twice that number wounded on the cobblestones.

The directors of Krupp's were arrested for inciting their workers to riotous conduct. But it was impossible, or at least inadvisable, to prevent a public funeral of the dead men, acclaimed as martyrs when they passed in open coffins, with their wounds visible to the vast crowds who lined the way. For hours after the funeral all the factory hands of Krupp's great steel works listened to speeches from their leaders. To the ears of French soldiers withdrawn from the streets came the sound of singing in hoarse voices. It was the hymn of "*Deutschland über Alles*".

It was not good for the nerves of sentries standing alone on railway sidings, or guarding signal-boxes, in a solitude of steel. More sabotage was taking place. More trains were wrecked, and French soldiers were killed. A young man was caught jamming the points. His name was Schlageter. It was necessary to make an example. One morning, after he had written letters home—rather noble letters of resignation and courage—he was blindfolded and put against a wall and shot. The French had made a martyr.

The Communists were rising in many towns both in occupied and unoccupied Germany. They had seized the public offices in Munich and Dresden. The Separatists were recruiting their ranks from the criminal classes, and fighting in Aachen, Düsseldorf, and other towns with a brutality which infuriated law-abiding Germans loyal to the Reich and contemptuous of this movement to separate the Rhineland from the rest of Germany.

M. Tirard, French Commissioner of the Rhineland, favoured this movement. He was writing great reports about it to the French Government. He exaggerated its possibilities. He was not prepared to admit that it was supported by the dregs of the population and by the payment of French money to hungry boys and hooligans. There were unpleasant incidents when French soldiers had to stand by while German

policemen in Düsseldorf—not arrested like their comrades in Essen—were beaten to death by these young blackguards.

Anarchy was beginning to show its Medusa head in Germany. The whole nation was slipping towards deep pits of ruin and revolution. Its money was becoming worthless, as the printing press poured out paper notes to pay the wages of unemployed workers. Hundreds of marks, thousands of marks, presently millions of marks, were necessary to buy a pound of potatoes or a bit of meat. Wages were increased every day as the value of the paper money fell, but never in time to catch up with the rise in prices of foodstuffs and all the necessities of life. It was the beginning of the great delirium called "Inflation"—a new word in human history—when the greatest industrial nation in Europe lurched into bankruptcy and lived through a nightmare in which many went mad. Money meant nothing but astronomical figures printed on a bit of paper.

Trade came to a standstill in great cities. The wheels of industry ceased to turn. Armies of unemployed men stood outside deserted factories where no chimneys smoked. There was an epidemic of suicide among young people on the threshold of life. Despair crept into the soul of the nation.

And in the Ruhr, which had once been the heart of German industry, the power-house of its enormous energy, the mighty machine from which most of its wealth had been produced in the raw material of its civilization, five million workers still maintained their passive resistance to the French occupation, as sullen, as obstinate, as unyielding as when the French cavalry had entered Essen.

## XXII

It was Lieutenant Meyer who knew most of what was happening in the Ruhr. As an intelligence officer and interpreter, he went about among the civilians, not only in Essen but in the outlying towns and villages.

"This situation can't be held much longer on either side," he told Gatières one evening. "We must either break the spirit of these people or we shall have to withdraw our occupation. It's a race with revolution."

Gatières was gloomy.

"I don't see the end of it. I have never seen the sense of it."

Meyer shared his depression, but had one gleam of hope.

"I had letters from Paris this morning. My friends tell me that there is a change of public opinion. The French people are getting doubtful about this Ruhr adventure. They are also getting doubtful about that old gentleman, M. Poincaré. There is a catchword going round the cafés. '*Il est peut-être un peu trop rigide, notre Poincaré!*' They suggest a change over to Herriot, who would liquidate, they think, this business of the Ruhr."

Gatières looked gloomily into his friend's eyes.

"If that's true, there may be an end to this dismal experience. Essen, I confess, is getting on my nerves. One can't even go for a walk after dusk without a sense of apprehension. Last night when I went out to breathe the air I heard a bullet flick past my right ear unpleasantly close."

Meyer raised his eyebrows and looked serious.

"If I were you, I wouldn't breathe the air of Essen after dark, especially as you wander about alone. If you must stretch your legs I should advise you to take Sergeant Michel with you."

Gatières did not approve of that idea with enthusiasm.

"Michel is a conversationalist. I like to be alone now and then."

Meyer smiled good-naturedly.

"That is a hint to me! . . . And by the by, talking about Sergeant Michel, I think you might say a word to him about that German girl downstairs. I find them flirting together in the courtyard. Yesterday when I came in he had his arms round her in a darkness which was not quite dark enough for total eclipse."

Gatières shrugged his shoulders.

"Michel is an amorist. I can't restrain him. Besides, I don't think it's my business."

Meyer looked serious for a moment.

"The population of Essen doesn't like women who are friendly with French soldiers, and there's an old woman in the kitchen who may give them away. I noticed her watching them yesterday. She had a look in her eyes which was distinctly unpleasant. She looked like Madame Medusa before she had her throat cut by Monsieur Perseus."

"I've warned him once," said Gatières.

He also had noticed this affair between Sergeant Michel and that girl. It was the girl who brought him up his coffee in the morning. She was a pretty creature, with hair of spun gold and blue eyes, very shy at first until he put her at her ease by talking German. Her name was Greta, according to Sergeant Michel, who seemed to attract her. Her father was a miner in Essen, and she had four brothers and sisters to whom she took home scraps of food left over by the French officers from their army rations. It was a great help, she said. Without that they would all have been starving.

Gatières was inclined to give her a friendly warning about Sergeant Michel, that incurable amorist. Several times, like Meyer, he had seen them together in the courtyard, and once in a narrow alley behind the house, leading down to a plot of vacant ground. They were certainly holding hands. Once, indeed, he was almost certain that Michel had his arm round the girl's waist. Very indiscreet. But Captain Gatières reflected upon a certain indiscretion of his own, night after night in the library of Heinrich von Menzel. He had put his arms round Ina. He had clasped her to his breast. He had kissed her with passion. He would be a hypocrite if he reproached his sergeant for making love to a German girl in Essen. Like master, like man. As Michel had said very truly, "Human nature is human nature." One couldn't get away from that. A man needed love, and love had no

nationality. It was the damned loneliness of life which was so hard to bear. How could he reprove his sergeant when there was still an ache in his own heart, an agony in his spirit, because of that parting with Ina in her father's house?

She had not answered his letters. They were letters in which he had poured out his thanks for her gift of love and her comradeship. But now he thought over them, remembering words and phrases which he had written hurriedly, incoherently, in poignant emotion, he was conscious that she might have thought him cold and unkind because he had asked her to put her own happiness before any thought of him. If her happiness depended upon obeying the will of her parents, her love for him would lead to unhappiness. If her happiness was bound up with her home life in Germany, she must put him out of her mind and heart, except as a memory of friendship, because, as a French officer, he would always be regarded as an enemy by her people, unless some miracle happened to blot out hatred.

*My dearest and most beautiful Ina (he wrote), you are so very young and I am so very old and worn—old in suffering and experience of war. It isn't fair of me to accept your love when I know that I should lead you away from your own people and perhaps spoil your life by bringing you to France where there would be no great kindness to my German wife. In truth and honour I must tell you this. I would not for the world take advantage of your charming kindness if I thought that it would lead to heartbreak and unhappiness for you. So I do not hold you to anything that happened in your father's house, and now that I am in the Ruhr—doing work I hate as a French officer—doing work which seems hateful to every German, and perhaps also to you and Otto—I beg you not to think for a moment that because you allowed me to embrace you, it is a pledge to me of all your life. Fate itself is very cruel to us. There is a sword thrust between us by the hatred and cruelty of national enmities in which you and I do not believe. I should hate myself if I were to be an agent of cruelty and reward your graciousness by brutal selfishness.*

He remembered those words, or something like them. He had meant them with absolute sincerity, but now, as they surged up in his mind and memory, they seemed to be a kind of rejection of her love, a kind of warning that he had finished with her. Could she possibly have read his words like that? Had he broken that child's heart while protesting that he would hate himself for cruelty?

Why hadn't she written to him? He had sent the letters to her home in Mainz, knowing that she would be somewhere in Berlin, but if they had been forwarded there was time enough for answers. He had waited for them week after week, now, and not a word had come.

He was writing another letter to Ina von Menzel in his bedroom one evening, when he heard through the closed window a noise which made him suddenly jerk up his head and listen intently. It was the sound of tramping feet in the courtyard below, followed by a girl's shriek. The footsteps passed, but he could still hear the shrieks, growing fainter.

He stood up and called out :

"Are you there, Michel?"

His orderly did not answer, and Gatières remembered that he had gone out two hours ago to have a game of billiards with some of his comrades.

"*Cré nom de Dieu !*" said Gatières.

The cries of that girl were faint now. What was happening down there in the alley which led to the waste ground? Some horrible brutality.

He strapped on his revolver and rushed downstairs, fumbling his way down a dark passage to the kitchen which led to the back of the house.

The old woman who cooked there was standing at the back door, peering out. He spoke to her sharply in German.

"What is that? What is happening?"

There was one lamp burning on the kitchen table, and she turned to its light and leered at him with an evil smile.

"It is the fault of your sergeant. He has been too friendly



with Greta. They punish girls who have been too friendly with French soldiers."

Gatières grabbed her arm and swung her away from the door, and strode out into the darkness.

Shriek after shriek came from that girl somewhere beyond the alley. He ran with the revolver clenched in his right hand, stumbling once over a loose stone, so that he nearly fell. At the end of the alley it was lighter. On the waste bit of ground he could see a dozen or more figures struggling with someone in their midst. They were shouting and laughing. He could hear their words.

"Cut her hair off!"

"Tear the clothes off her back!"

"Teach her what happens to German girls who get friendly with the French!"

"Stand back, there!" shouted Gatières harshly.

At the sound of his voice the group of men—mostly young ruffians—were startled, and fell back a few paces. Several of them darted away into the darkness beyond. For a moment Gatières saw that German girl, Greta, that pretty creature with spun gold hair and high cheekbones. Her clothes had been torn off her body. She stood there almost naked, clasping a few remaining rags. There was a look of extreme terror in her eyes like those of a trapped and tortured animal. Suddenly she fell sobbing to the wet ground.

"Swine!" shouted Gatières. "Brutes!"

He struck one of the louts a heavy blow with the clenched fist of his left hand, but there were ten of them, or more, and they snarled at him like angry dogs. One of them made a rush from behind. Gatières felt as though the back of his skull had been broken. Then he felt nothing else at all, and knew nothing while they kicked him. It was only afterwards that he knew they had kicked him almost to death before he was rescued by Sergeant Michel.

It was Sergeant Michel he saw when he opened his eyes in a military hospital.

"*Comment ça va, mon capitaine ?*" said Sergeant Michel. For a few moments Gatières thought he was back in the war.

"Have they counter-attacked ?" he asked.

Sergeant Michel was puzzled for a moment. Then he laughed by his officer's bedside.

"*Tout va bien, mon capitaine. La guerre est finie, vous savez !*"

He had a letter for Captain Gatières, which that officer left unread, not feeling strong enough to open it just then.

Sergeant Michel had a few things to say about the assault upon Greta and about the men who had injured his captain. They were not nice things. He used language which would have startled a battalion of Chasseurs Alpains, who are not easily alarmed by forcible expressions.

Then suddenly he caught hold of his officer's hand and kissed it.

"*Mon capitaine,*" he said in a broken voice, while there were tears in his eyes, "permit an old comrade to thank you for a great service. If one day I might have the honour to die for you——"

"What's all that nonsense ?" asked Gatières, smiling painfully under his bandages. His head ached as though a sledge-hammer were beating into his brain.

In his weakness it was several minutes before he glanced at the letter lying on his bed, and picked it up with eagerness. It had the postmark of Berlin. It was from Otto von Menzel. It contained terrible news. Ina was dead. The doctor called it pneumonia, but she had been broken-hearted because of her parting with Gatières and the belief that she had killed her father by being the cause of his paralytic stroke. She had expected a letter from Gatières but none had come. Otto knew now that his mother had burned some letters addressed to Ina at her house in Mainz.

*It is (wrote Otto) unpardonable. I no longer believe in God or man. Life is unendurable. Why should we suffer like this ? Life*

*is one long torture and tragedy. I cannot believe that my dear sister is dead. I cry out in an agony of grief.*

He wrote many wild words in that letter, but Gatières did not read them at the time. His nurse found him unconscious—and after that he was delirious, and hour after hour seemed to be tortured by some pledge of honour, which he had broken because of his love for a girl called Ina.

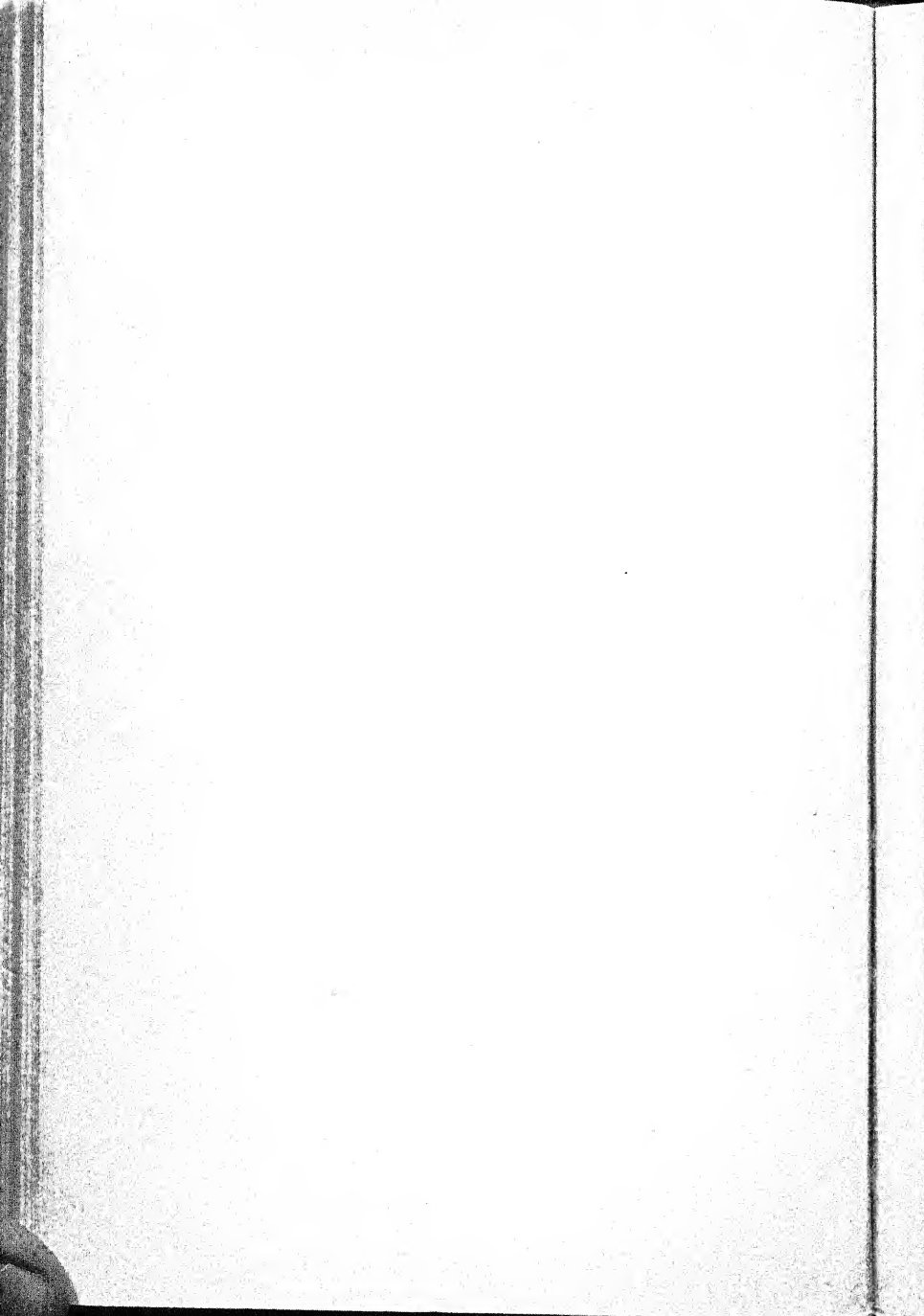
"He keeps speaking German," said the nurse to an anxious doctor. "What is that he is saying now?"

The doctor listened.

He was saying the words "*gnädiges Fräulein*".

It was the end of his adventure in the Ruhr, and as an officer of the French Army. After his convalescence he was sent home to Avignon, a month or two before Herriot followed Poincaré, and was less "rigid", and withdrew the Army of Occupation from Essen and its neighbouring towns.

*PART II*



### XXIII

It was five years later when Armand Gatières became a professor of history at the Lycée in Avignon. Just before the war he had taken his degree at the university of Aix-en-Provence, and that was good enough to qualify him for this post, though not without a certain influence which he obtained from General Mougins and other friends who backed his credentials and applied on his behalf in the right quarter. He was helped by a series of articles on Provençal history which he wrote for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and by some lectures on the fortified towns of Provence before the Historical Society of Avignon which attracted more than local interest.

He was not without honour in his own city. Some of the students at the Lycée, even before he became one of their masters, nudged each other when they passed him in the street.

"See that fellow with a limp?" said one of them. "That's Captain Gatières, who did so well in the war. My father was telling me the story of his fight in the château of Vermelles. He grabbed a marble Venus and used it to crack the skulls of the Boches who came tumbling through the floor of the upper room. He has the Croix de Guerre with palms and an English decoration for special valour."

The other young man stared after Gatières.

"He looks like D'Artagnan in *Twenty Years After*."

For such young men, who nudged each other when he passed, or who touched their caps to him because he knew their families, Armand had always a quick smile, and his eyes lighted up instantly. It was one reason why he had been eager to get that post of history professor at the Lycée, and pulled all the wires he could to get it. Otherwise he was

inclined to melancholy, as his mother saw with some concern, especially for the first year or two after his return from the Ruhr. It was for his sake that she encouraged social gatherings in her old house, somewhat to his annoyance. Retired officers, professors with their wives, priests and pious ladies were pleased to take tea with her on Sundays or coffee on Wednesday evenings after dinner. On some of these occasions young women—sisters or daughters of the aforesaid professors and retired officers—appeared on the scene and engaged Armand in polite conversation, disappointed when they became aware after several visits that they were not advancing in intimacy, and that his courtesy masked his indifference to their intelligence and charm.

Once or twice he spoke to his mother on the subject with good-natured irony :

"*Chère Maman*, need we lead such a gay life? Do you think it really necessary for my health of mind to chatter with unattractive young women who expect me to fall in love with them?"

Madame Gatières had her own convictions on the subject, but evaded a direct answer.

"Why do you find them unattractive, Armand? I am sure Mademoiselle de Mericourt is extremely intelligent and vivacious."

Armand groaned slightly, but ended with a laugh.

"Isn't she just a little too vivacious? I find it trying to keep pace with her vivacity. I want to crawl under the sofa."

Madame Gatières confessed herself baffled by this dislike of Mademoiselle de Mericourt. She referred to another visitor against whom a similar objection was unreasonable.

"Well, my dear, what about Odette Cavaillon? She's a charming little thing and quite serious. You admitted that she writes very pleasant poetry."

"Certainly," said Armand. "I like the young woman. I have nothing against her except that she has no gift of



silence. But, my dear *Maman*, I want to impress upon you that I am a confirmed bachelor. It isn't worth your while to encourage visits from the eligible young females of Avignon. If they're pretty I like to look at them. If they're young and fresh I enjoy their company for an odd half-hour because youth is always exquisite, but I am not going to marry any of them. Not even one of them !"

Madame Gatières was distressed by her son's refusal to contemplate marriage. She could not understand it. She was quite certain that he would be happier with a charming wife, now that Lucille was married to her Englishman, and no longer his companion.

She wondered sometimes whether there were any secret reason for his remaining a bachelor—some episode of war-time which he had not revealed to her. Once or twice she had a suspicion that he had had a sentimental affair with some German girl, but she could not bring herself to question him about anything so horrible—it seemed to her horrible—and he never said a word on the subject.

It was because of his silence that she could not resist the idea that something had happened at Mainz in the family where he had been billeted so long. He had written sometimes before his return from the Ruhr about a girl named Ina von Menzel. He had said something about the exquisite way in which she played Chopin. In one of his letters home he had referred to her again with the news that she was coming back from Berlin for Christmas with her brother Otto. After that he had never mentioned her again, until one night when Madame Gatières remembered her suddenly and asked a question about her.

"What happened to that German Girl, Armand? I mean the sister of that young man Otto, in whose house you were billeted."

Armand was reading an evening paper with his legs stretched beyond a low chair. For a moment he did not answer. Then he said quietly :

"She died."

"Really? A young girl like that?"

"Yes. It happens like that."

He rose from his chair suddenly and left the room, while his mother went on with her embroidery, wondering whether perhaps she had blundered upon some tragic memory which he hid from her.

It was a blow to him when Lucille was married to her Englishman. He had enjoyed their sketching expeditions, and it was quite a long time after her departure for England that he had the courage to bring out his water-colours again—not, indeed, until he yielded to his sister's entreaties to stay in her English home.

"We will do some painting together," she wrote. "You will find many good subjects. England is the paradise of landscape painters."

He took his mother, of course, though she dreaded the journey with the usual French dislike of foreign travel and apprehensions of the English climate. And yet it was extraordinarily easy to get to London and then on to Lucille's home in Sussex.

Even Armand was astonished at the shortness of the journey—they broke it for a night in Paris—and the comfort with which they crossed the Channel, of whose horrors they had heard so much. As a Frenchman of the south, any sea less calm than the Mediterranean seemed to him an abominable stretch of water. He was alarmed lest his mother—always rather delicate—should develop pneumonia in English fogs. They had come prepared for the worst, with rugs and waterproofs, but on this first visit in the month of June they were astounded by blue skies and brilliant sunshine.

"It's a miracle," explained Armand. "God has forgotten for a moment His ancient grudge against these melancholy islanders. To-morrow I shan't be able to see you through the fog. Undoubtedly we shall find Lucille's house in a

wet swamp. Otherwise we have been misinformed by French tradition."

He was not speaking quite seriously. Yet he was honestly startled by the brilliance of the weather, and by the beauty of the English landscape.

Lucille and her husband, Arthur Marshall, met them with a car at Victoria station, and drove them for an hour and a half through the English countryside after they had left the outskirts of London. Armand sat rather silent next to his brother-in-law, who took the wheel. Lucille, looking radiant with happiness, sat in the back seat, holding her mother's hand, and chattering rapidly in French like a schoolgirl home for the holidays. Armand listened to her while he stared ahead with smiling and observant eyes.

"*Maman*, this is England! I have fallen in love with England. The English people are very kind to me. Of course I have no doubt they think I am a strange creature, but they hide their thoughts and make the best of me! Lots of distinguished people have called on me—for Arthur's sake, of course. Some of them are officers who fought in the war, and of course I am a little afraid of their wives. They all play golf, which is a game of extreme difficulty to a Frenchwoman. Nevertheless I am learning to play golf. It is necessary to play golf if one is the wife of an Englishman. Otherwise one would lose his affection and esteem. Is it not so, Arthur?"

Arthur, at the wheel, grinned good-humouredly and answered in English.

"It's a very helpful game in married life."

Lucille translated this answer for the benefit of her mother, and then called out to Armand:

"Armand, my dear, I think we had a little controversy about the English climate? Acknowledge that you see the sun!"

"It is there," he admitted. "What about to-morrow?"

"I have been praying for fine weather," she told him.

"I believe my prayers are going to be answered."

"Then you admit it is a miracle!" said Armand, with dark irony and French logic.

Arthur Marshall spoke a few words in French.

"The English climate is not too bad, I assure you. When it is good it is extremely good. It is much maligned in France."

"It is the fault, perhaps, of your Charles Dickens," said Armand courteously. "He wrote always about fogs, and he is the only English writer who is ever read in France."

"Good God!" said Arthur Marshall, with a hearty laugh.

Armand looked out at the English countryside through which their car was gliding. It was very parklike and peaceful, and everywhere there was a profusion of wild flowers in the fields and hedges. As a Frenchman of Provence he was surprised at the hedges dividing the fields, and at the narrow lanes with high banks and overhanging trees through which the sun glinted. It was all intensely green and fresh and luxuriant, with a strange and enchanting combination of Nature and discipline. Men were trimming the hedges along the roadways, yet not too much to kill their wildness. Mansions and cottages—very ancient they looked—were standing in gardens where there was a riot of colour and yet not a weed to be seen, and not a rubbish heap nor any untidiness. The houses looked comfortable and well-kept. People were playing tennis on smooth lawns. The inhabitants of these villages who were gossiping together on open spaces—common land, perhaps—were well dressed. The girls looked bewitching in summer frocks. There were no barefooted peasants, as in Provence, no miserable scarecrows of humanity with clawlike hands, sitting blear-eyed in the market-place. These English villagers seemed to belong to a prosperous bourgeoisie.

Armand spoke to his host.

"Your people have a high standard of living. It is perhaps the richest country in the world."

Arthur Marshall raised his eyebrows, and gave a short laugh.

"I am afraid appearances are deceptive. We are all being taxed to death. The old families and the well-to-do. There are nearly three million unemployed—up in the North, mostly. An expensive luxury!"

Presently he directed Armand's attention to a noble old house, standing in a great park where some deer were sheltering under the trees.

"Elizabethan. The owner has had to sell his pictures—van Dycks and others. Rather sad! In a few years it will be cut up for a building estate. There will be rows of beastly little houses."

He sighed heavily over his wheel.

Armand was of opinion that he exaggerated the poverty of England. He could see no sign of it, then or later. There was no sign of it in his brother-in-law's house, which was partly Tudor, with a Georgian wing. He was impressed by its magnificence and enchanted by the sweeping lawns, as smooth as a Persian carpet, with yew hedges, incredibly old, and flower gardens below a terrace with a marble balustrade.

While his mother was resting in her room and Arthur was changing for dinner, Lucille took her brother's hand and led him on to the terrace, where a sundial had told the time for three centuries or more.

"You must come and see my roses," she said, putting an arm round his shoulder. "But first of all, tell me, how do you like my English home?"

"Magnificent! Wonderfully beautiful. I thought your husband was a major in the English Army? Surely he must be an English prince of the Blood Royal."

She laughed very happily.

"Nothing like that! This is a small place compared with other houses in the neighbourhood. And Arthur says he's getting desperately poor because of all the taxes. He has had to send away three of his gardeners."

"How many are left?" asked Armand.

"Only two."

"*Quelle misère !*" exclaimed Armand, with a laugh which was echoed by his sister.

Perhaps that explained the poverty of England. People with five gardeners sent away three. People with four motor-cars had to get along with one. They felt very wretched about it. They seemed to be approaching the edge of ruin when their taxes had left them with incomes only four times as big as those of people of their own class in France. So Armand suggested to his sister.

She smiled and shook her head.

"I don't understand these things, but Arthur tells me that the English aristocracy is committing suicide out of sheer benevolence. They allow themselves to be taxed to death because they are liberalized and won't stand for lowering the standard of living among the working people. Arthur says the Conservatives are really Socialists. He says the working-classes are really Conservative. It's all very bewildering."

"It sounds to me very untrue," said Armand. "But then these English are inexplicable. Have you discovered that they have any system of logic in their minds—or perhaps any minds in which to have a system of logic?"

Lucille took his hand and smacked it, and then raised it to her lips.

"They don't believe in logic, *mon vieux* ! But you mustn't abuse them. They are my people now. I am learning to love them. They are kind. They have agreeable minds. They are very simple and yet very deep. They hide their emotions, but they feel strongly. They love animals, and trees, and flowers, and wind, and rain, and all that is natural. They have no wit, but a sense of humour which is adorable. They are shy—the men especially—and at first they seem cold, and perhaps a little rude and offhand, but their manners are perfect because they have no pretence, and are kind instead of being polite. They don't like intelligence very much, especially if it is brilliant. They prefer character

and simplicity. And they keep very young, Armand. I find that English gentlemen of fifty are like schoolboys in their love of games and their refusal to grow old. . . . But I am talking too much. It is because I want to tell you a thousand things about my new life."

"Tell me a million things!" said Armand.

She clasped his arm and laid her head against his shoulder.

"Now it is your turn! What is happening in your mind? What are you going to do with your life? When are you going to get married?"

"I am not going to get married."

"Why not, Armand?"

It was not then that he answered the last question. But one evening, before he left after his first visit, he opened his heart to her. He spoke to her about Ina von Menzel.

They were alone together on the terrace, sitting on the steps below the sundial. Above their heads were a million stars. There was a milky radiance in this old English garden, and the warm air was drenched with the scent of carnations. An owl hooted now and then, and there were little rustlings and scamperings in the flower-beds beyond the steps. It was peaceful.

"Tell me, Armand," said Lucille suddenly, "were you in love with that nice German girl—Ina von Menzel? Is that why you don't want to marry?"

She took his hand and held it between both of hers.

He was silent for a few moments before he answered. And then it was to ask a question—two questions.

"What is love? Is it the same as passion?"

"Perhaps it begins with passion," said Lucille. "After that it is comradeship, but with something mystical in the union of two minds."

He leaned forward, looking into the starlit garden with its gulfs of darkness.

"She offered me her love," he said. "But I was afraid. She was charming and exquisite, but I see now that I was



cowardly. I tried to hold her at arm's length, and talked to her about her parents, and my parents, and the hatred between France and Germany. She was like Juliet, but I was a wretched Romeo !"

"You were thinking of honour," said Lucille. "You were thinking also of her happiness. It was an impossible situation for a French officer and a German girl of good family."

"Love should refuse to recognize impossible situations," said Armand. "Her love for me was ready for all sacrifice."

"Poor child !" said Lucille softly.

Armand plucked a flower growing by the side of the terrace steps. It was one of the carnations scenting the night air.

"It was the infernal cruelty of life which killed her. That's what I can't understand. The infernal cruelty of men and women to each other. Their damned stupidity."

"Some of them are very kind," said Lucille. "I find these English people kind."

"And yet they have done a lot of fighting in other people's fields," said Armand. "Even now they are bombing Arabs in Mesopotamia because they refuse to pay their taxes. We are kind until we are cruel. We are kind until our interests are touched, or racial hatred intervenes, or fear makes us arm against each other, and fight again. Already we are preparing for the next war."

Lucille gave a little cry.

"Don't say that, Armand ! It is too frightful."

"It's true," he said. "I see it coming. Unless . . ."

He was silent for a few moments, sitting there on the terrace steps with his hands clasped.

"It's only the younger people who can stop the next war," he said presently. "We must get hold of the younger minds. I'm trying to do something in that way. I want to save another massacre of youth."

"Yes," said Lucille. "Save my baby, Armand !"

He looked up at her quickly through that starlit darkness.

"You are going to have a baby?"

"An English son, I hope," said Lucille gladly.

He put his arm about her and kissed her cheek.

"That is excellent news! I shall be the uncle of an Englishman. How amusing!"

Lucille's English baby was born after Armand's return to Avignon. It had dark eyes like those of its French mother. On a second visit to England Armand was introduced to this nephew and paid homage to him.

## XXIV

Time had passed quietly but with a stealthy swiftness in Avignon. The months had slipped by. The years had slipped by. The war was becoming a remote memory. Those who had been schoolboys, playing with hoops and tops when their fathers were being killed at Verdun and in many other places, were now young men in their last term at the Lycée or their first term at the university of Aix-en-Provence. Girls who had worn pigtailed and short frocks when the Germans were advancing on Paris were now the mothers of babes. The war was no longer a topic of conversation, even among men who had been through it. They talked instead of party politics in Paris and the arrival of André Tardieu in the place of Poincaré, and the reputation of Briand in foreign affairs.

Germany for a time had been more settled. The Dawes Plan and the Young Plan had followed the collapse of her financial system. Under the pressure of England and the United States the German nation, led by Stresemann, had been admitted to the League of Nations. France withdrew from her positions on the Rhine several years before the time limit imposed by the Peace Treaty. The Pact of Locarno, engineered by the English statesman, Sir Austen Chamberlain

—a lover of France—with the co-operation of Lord D'Abernon, the English Ambassador in Berlin, had done something—but not much—to reassure French anxieties regarding the security of their frontiers.

After a series of crises in which the French Chamber had revealed a lamentable weakness and a cowardly subservience to mob opinion, the financial situation of France had been steadied by heavier taxation and a balanced Budget. Now it was threatened again—the whole world was threatened—by astounding happenings in the United States. The American people had been indulging in an orgy of gambling. Their stocks and shares had rocketed up to fantastic heights. People of all classes had speculated madly in Wall Street, believing in fairy gold, in the inexhaustible prosperity of their nation, in the easy game of get-rich-quick. There had been a landslide in Wall Street, a panic sweeping like a forest fire across the States. In a single night millions of imaginary dollars had disappeared, and millions of small folk awoke to find themselves ruined. God's own country was being smitten by heavy blows, and there were repercussions in every country of the world. . . .

These things entered into the conversation of social life in Avignon. Every day's history brought new anxieties, new controversies, new sensations, into the headlines of the newspapers; but not much nearer than that into the lives of quiet folk who, after the war, had returned to their normal avocations. In the fields of Provence the peasants stooped over their crops or drove their mules up the steep paths to the hill-top towns. The olive groves produced their fruit, season by season, whatever might be said by M. Léon Blum in Paris or by M. Edouard Herriot in Lyons. Artists still tried new ways of getting beauty or truth on to a strip of canvas—not without horrible results. Scholars, forgetting a modern war, returned to their studies of ancient civilizations. And in the Lycée of Avignon, where Armand Gatières was professor of history, new classes of youth sat on the same

benches as their elder brothers, polished the desks again with their elbows, and absorbed, or failed to absorb, a certain number of facts about the reigns of the Valois, the religious wars of the sixteenth century, the consolidation of France under Richelieu, the splendours of the *Roi Soleil*, the coming of Revolution, the campaigns of Napoleon, the foundation of the First Empire, and so on, to Sedan, the Republic, and the day before yesterday.

Armand Gatières liked his work. In his own hours he steeped himself in all this history, trying to find his own philosophy to give some coherence to this labyrinth. He taught his students with a certain irony which amused them. He was not very strong on hero-worship. He was cynical about the heroes. He showed his open disgust sometimes for the brutality, the intolerance, the swaggering bully spirit of past ages, and reserved his enthusiasm for the men of ideas and art, the poets and scholars, and painters and builders, and those who had given some heritage of beauty to France.

"Our professor of history is an idealist," was the report which went home to certain houses in Avignon. "He is also somewhat of a sceptic, and, for a soldier, strangely hostile to heroics. But he knows his subject all right, and makes it less boring than one might expect. He is rather charming, and has a sense of humour. There is something about his smile . . ."

They did not get down to the mystery behind his smile—those boys of sixteen or seventeen who sat on the benches below his desk. How could they know that when he looked along their lines he was thinking sometimes of the frightful slaughter of youth which he had seen at Souchez and Neuville St. Vaast in the first year of the war? Some of those lads—his comrades—who had been mown down like grass by machine-gun fire were not much older than these students now; some of them not older, having volunteered before their time came. He liked to see these young faces in front

of him—the new generation of France, the heirs of all its tradition and vitality and gaiety of life. Some of them had no sense of discipline. While he talked to them they were drawing naked girls on their blotting-pads, or writing comic verses which they passed to each other under the desks, or caricaturing him outrageously—as he very well knew. That didn't worry him at all. On the contrary, he congratulated one of these caricaturists—young Valérie—on a very good effort.

*"C'est fort, ça ! Très original ! Mes félicitations !"*

It was a particularly distorted portrait, but had seized the salient characteristics of Armand's face, as he recognized instantly.

*"Mille pardons !"* said the boy, much embarrassed by this praise.

*"Mais vous avez du talent,"* said Armand sincerely.

He retaliated on his class by comic portraits of the leading rebels, and they had a great success, being received with howls of laughter even by the victims—even by Gaston Bourdin whose ears stuck out at right angles. They were so successful that no student felt that he had reached honourable distinction unless he had been caricatured by the professor of history.

"Look here, my lads," said Armand, after one of these hilarious episodes of art, "if you kick up such a row I shall get the sack from our distinguished Director of Studies. Then you will get a new professor of history who will make you learn the dates of all the kings, queens, and battles of France, which will be a very tedious affair for you."

This warning had the desired effect, though it had to be repeated for the benefit of new vintages of French youth. They entered into a silent conspiracy with this professor of history. They became as silent as death when the door opened and the Director entered suspiciously and stealthily. One and all appeared to be absorbed in study—so utterly absorbed that they were unaware of his entrance.

"I thought I heard a good deal of laughter," said M. Martin, the Director of the Lycée, who bore a remarkable resemblance to Monsieur Poincaré.

Armand Gatières raised his eyebrows.

"The students are working very well," he answered. "I have no reason for complaint."

"*Très bien !*"

M. Martin disappeared. The students raised their heads from their books and grinned. Armand retained his gravity.

He was free and easy with them. He treated them as reasonable beings. He allowed free criticism and discussion of his own remarks. They had heated arguments with him, and he answered their points with complete candour and intellectual respect. Sometimes the whole of his class time would be taken up by a discussion like this, some of the boys shouting each other down or getting angry at some view expressed by one of their comrades.

"That's treason to France. You're a damned traitor. You have no patriotism !"

So young Valérie accused young Bourdin one day.

"My dear Valérie," said Armand, "this is an intellectual conversation. We are trying to arrive at the truth of things. Why behave like M. Franklin Bouillon appealing to his electors and denouncing M. Léon Blum ? We all know that you are a subscriber to *L'Action Française*. But I assure you that the character of Richelieu may be discussed without political heat. Have a cigarette, *mon vieux* ?"

It was against rules to smoke in class. Armand Gatières waived such rules now and then with his elder students. They appreciated these concessions to liberty and comfort. He became so popular with them that it was the cause of friction with some of the other professors, who suffered from riotous and disorderly conduct in spite of their attempts at discipline.

The professor of mathematics, Claude Barbier, who was a martinet, was distinctly annoyed at Armand's method.

"The fact is, Gatières," he said one day, "you pander to these fellows. They do just what they please with you. No discipline! No order! No respect for your position! It's subversive!"

Armand smiled carelessly.

"The results justify my system. Two of my last year's students are doing brilliantly at Aix. I had a letter from Julien, and he congratulates me on sending up young men who have the most original ideas on history and are tremendously keen. He thinks they will go far."

Barbier, a middle-aged man with a scar down his left cheek, sneered at this defence.

"You cultivate two or three intelligent boys and let the rest do what they like. I don't call that a system. I call it Bolshevism."

Armand Gatières retained his good humour.

"My dear Barbier, you can call it what you like. *Je m'en fiche*. As a matter of fact I don't pretend to have a system. All I try to do is to interest my class in the subjects I am supposed to teach. It's not easy, as you well know. The young human animal is restless, especially on fine days. He resents having to poke his nose over a book. He wants to stretch his young limbs. I hate having to be the torturer of youth."

Claude Barbier disliked that kind of talk. It seemed to him weakly sentimental. He hated the young human animal. He detested its restlessness, its stupidity, its insolence, and its cruelty. It was he who was being tortured by their disorder and disobedience. There were times when he glared at his class with murderous hatred. But he had the misfortune to teach mathematics.

He made that point to Gatières.

"I happen to teach mathematics. It's easier for you. You can keep them quiet by bawdy stories about the Court of Louis XV."

"There's something in that," admitted Armand, with



his usual sense of humour. "They like a little scandal now and then."

He made this concession to Barbier, an ugly-tempered and intolerant man, who, for some unknown reason, had taken a dislike to him. He suspected that it was Barbier who reported certain disorderly episodes in the history class to the Director. One of Barbier's nephews happened to be in the senior class. This lad must have told his uncle about an incident between Valérie and Bourdin.

They had had an argument about the French Revolution. Bourdin had expressed great admiration for Marat. Young Valérie remembered that one of his ancestors had been guillotined in Paris, and this praise of Marat annoyed him extremely.

He was worse than Lenin, he told Bourdin hotly.

Young Bourdin said that Marat was the forerunner of Lenin, and the apostle of Liberty.

"He was a dirty murderer," said Valérie. "What you call Liberty is the tyranny of the beast mind, the envy of superior intelligence, hatred of culture, and class jealousy seeking revenge."

Bourdin used an objectionable word of contempt, and young Valérie slapped him across the mouth with the back of his hand. They started fighting, until Armand pulled them apart, and dressed them down with such sarcasm that they both looked shamefaced.

"How can we ever hope to get civilized," asked Armand, "if two historical scholars go for each other like anthropoid apes? Valérie, my child, you weren't well brought up, in spite of your distinguished ancestry. One doesn't argue with one's fists. Plato didn't walk about with a whip or a bludgeon. He had a genial way with him. He was patient even with folly. As for you, Bourdin, I must say you looked extremely like the caricature I did of you the other day as a Neolithic cave-man. You're a disgrace to this class. You've dragged it down to the level of a *bistro*."

"I suppose we shall get reported for this," said young Valérie dejectedly. "If I get expelled it will be very annoying to my father."

"Reported?" asked Armand. "Expelled? My dear lad, I am not going to report you. This regrettable incident is due to the hot weather and our famous mistral. Shake hands with Bourdin and forget it."

They shook hands, but young Barbier carried the story to his uncle, who passed it on to M. Martin.

M. Martin desired a private conversation with Captain Gatières. He referred to the fight in class.

"I must warn you, Gatières," he said, "that you are not a good disciplinarian. As the Director of this Lycée, I am responsible for its name and reputation. I regret that you did not report those boys."

Armand shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"No harm done, sir! The spirit of youth—rather hot. It was on a point of history. It shows a keen interest in their studies. Gaston Bourdin is reading the life of Marat. Young Valérie is making an intensive study of the French Revolution."

The Director of the Lycée looked exactly like M. Poincaré when addressing his political opponents.

"No doubt you were a good officer in the war," he said stiffly, "but one handles a class rather differently from a battalion."

"It's the same human nature," argued Armand. "An officer can only handle a battalion with sympathy and a sense of humour. Boys respond to the same spirit. They object to being treated like robots. I uphold their objection. As a matter of fact, my dear M. Martin, these boys of ours are splendid. I am filled with admiration for their intelligence and character. France ought to be proud of them."

M. Martin permitted himself a faint smile.

"They are perhaps no worse than their predecessors," he admitted grudgingly. "But all boys of a certain age are primitive barbarians. One has to tame them in order to

civilize them. One must have discipline, my dear Gatières."

"Agreed !" said Armand, without enthusiasm. "But the best discipline comes from loyalty and understanding."

He had the loyalty of his class.

## XXV

This ex-captain of Chasseurs was a hard worker, and did not find his day quite long enough for all he wanted to do. Apart from vacations, his work at the Lycée did not leave him much leisure. The hours were long, and in the evenings, as a rule, he had papers to correct, or a certain amount of hard reading on various epochs of French history, into which he dived for more than superficial knowledge just good enough to hold a class. Then he made a rule, to which he kept as a point of honour, to devote at least an hour after dinner to his mother's company. During term time she saw very little of him in the day, and it was only fair to her to be sociable for that one hour when Madeleine—the maid-servant—brought in the coffee and they could talk in tranquillity.

It was a very precious hour to both of them, but it meant working late into the night sometimes on certain business which he regarded as the most interesting and important purpose of his life—the main excuse, he thought, for being alive when so many of his former comrades were dead. It was dedicated in spirit to them. It was work which he hoped would help a little to save the new generation of youth from the agony which these older men had suffered, and from the massacre which had destroyed the world's best manhood, best intelligence, noblest spirit, leaving civilization itself in danger of collapse.

He had joined certain associations which were pledged to the same purpose, though different in method and approach

to the problems of peace. He had become a member of the *Ligue des Combattants de la Paix*, and was in correspondence with the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*, pacifist societies which attacked militarism, supported the League of Nations, and endeavoured to establish friendly relations and discussions with the youth of Germany.

Often, late at night, when his mother had gone to bed, Armand sat up in his study at the top of the old house in the rue du Château busy with papers on this subject, drawing up agendas for meetings, translating communications from German correspondents, and writing articles for French and German publications. He was, for example, a regular contributor to *Der Friede*, published by Gustav Hoffmann of Düsseldorf, that German Jew who had taken him prisoner in time of war. He was in constant communication with this man, whom he regarded as one of the most intelligent and devoted leaders of the German peace movement, and who wrote long and interesting letters keeping him in touch with the situation in Germany with complete candour. In return, Armand Gatières kept him posted about French anxieties and difficulties in regard to disarmament and international affairs.

He had another correspondent in Germany who was an active worker for peace, and the Berlin representative of the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*. It was Otto von Menzel, broken-hearted because of his sister's death, but friendly and affectionate to the man whom, as he knew, she had loved. His letters were touching in their spiritual revelation, alternating between dark moods of pessimism, extremely bitter, poignant in despair for German youth, cynical of the old leaders, hopeless of economic recovery—and an idealism which sometimes was too visionary and too sentimental for practical purposes. He was now in a newspaper office—*Die Woche*—as one of the sub-editors, and though he was drawing only a small salary sufficient to keep body and soul together, he marvelled at his own good fortune

in getting such a job at a time when so many of his friends were out of work, and without the slightest prospect of getting work, after obtaining their university degrees.

He was an ardent pacifist and extremely anxious to promote a friendly intercourse between French and German youth across the frontiers of hatred and intolerance. But he did not hide the unpopularity of such views among his contemporaries, and especially among those of his own social class.

*The Occupation of the Ruhr*, he wrote in one of his letters, is a memory which still rankles deep in the German mind. Rightly or wrongly—I am not sure—most people blame the inflation period, which thrust us into ruin and agony, upon that action of the French Government under Poincaré. I try to put all that on one side as ancient history. I have written an article for *Der Friede* which is an appeal to the younger mind in Germany to look forward instead of backward, and to work for friendship between a generation of French and German youth untrammelled by old feuds which lead nowhere except to renewed conflict.

I am all with your M. Briand for the United States of Europe—a federation of European peoples for the safeguarding of their common culture and the necessities of economic life, now getting choked by this passion for little nationalities, each with tariffs and customs and trade restrictions. We have six million unemployed in Germany. Gott in Himmel! how are we going to get them to work again, as long as these restrictions last, and while every other nation tries to keep out German goods? But, mon cher capitaine, I do not disguise from you that the German people are swinging away from liberalism and the international outlook to a more intense nationalism of their own. It is due, if I may say so, and as you freely admit, to the refusal of France to treat Germany on any terms of equality.

This sense of being the only disarmed nation in a world of armed Powers is intensifying the inferiority complex of the German people. It is making them pathological in their psychology. You have no idea of the madness in many German minds. Sometimes I am positively frightened by the conversations I hear around me. There

is a particular madman of whom I have written to you previously. It is Adolf Hitler, the leader of the so-called National Socialists—we call them the Nazis—and an ape of Mussolini. I send you his paper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. You will see that it is written in an insane asylum. He wants to destroy the Jews, whom he hates even worse than M. Poincaré! He has no love for the German Catholics—that is to say, the entire population of the Rhineland and Bavaria! He wants to capture the Banks and control Big Business—there I agree with him—but he also wants to establish a dictatorship of Fascist youth, inspired by the spirit of the bully, the code of the cut-throat, and the megalomania of perverted minds. He is out to smash the Treaty of Versailles by a nation in arms—that means another war—and he talks a lot of dark and mystical nonsense about “Aryanism” and a German Empire of the West, and the old pagan gods of the Fatherland, all of which is enough to make one sick, but, on the contrary, appeals to many minds as divine in its truth and beauty! I must send you his book, called “*Mein Kampf*”. You won’t be able to read it all. It’s a mass of incoherent stuff. But you would do well to glance at it.

Nevertheless, I don’t want to exaggerate the importance of this fellow. He is only a Schauspieler. There are still reserves of common sense in this unhappy country of mine, and I have hope that the men of my age will adopt a new and nobler philosophy, as builders of a new world. Do you remember our talks about that at Mainz? My dearest Ina was there. I miss her most terribly, and still hold a grudge against God for letting her die. . . .

That last article of yours was ausgezeichnet. I read it with great pleasure and admiration. I follow your lead humbly and loyally. Also I am corresponding with your friend Gustav Hoffmann, and subscribe to his paper *Der Friede*. It is excellent.

In that top room of the old house in the rue du Château our friend Gatières had a private life which he did not share with his mother or many friends in Avignon. In those midnight hours—sometimes he did not go to bed until two in the morning—his mind went back often to the years of war

which was now avoided in conversation. While the clock chimed in Avignon, or the arrival of another day was struck by the deep notes of Notre Dame des Doms, his spirit went back to the trenches, to dug-outs and billets, to field dressing-stations, to No Man's Land into which he had crawled on night raids with comrades who were now mostly dead. The whole drama of the war, the sound of enormous gunfire, the sharp *refale* of the *soixante-quinzes*, the chatter of machine-guns, the crack of a sniper's bullet, came into this book-lined room when his imagination was jerked back to his years as an officer of the Chasseurs. The very stench of war was in his nostrils again.

Sharply etched on his mind's eye were impressions which he had hardly noticed at the time, but which now became extraordinarily vivid, as though he saw them with a new and intense interest, framed by his window-curtains in the dark sky above the roofs of Avignon at night—impressions of scenes in Fort Douaumont and Vaux, during the battle of Verdun, and in the château of Vermelles, that time he had snatched the Venus from its pedestal to use as a weapon, and in Notre Dame de Lorette before the English had taken over the line below Vimy.

Little details came back to his remembrance, trivial episodes, momentary glimpses of unimportant things. There was a nightingale in Notre Dame de Lorette. It kept on singing above the gunfire. He had even seen it for a second on a bough lit up by lurid flashes. It continued to sing a love-song to its mate, careless of human warfare. It must have given him a thrill at the time, though he had only just remembered it again.

He remembered the faces of dead boys, some of them extraordinarily tranquil, as though they had gone to sleep and were having a pleasant dream; others mangled and smashed. He remembered the face of a young German soldier lying across the step of a ruined chapel somewhere in the neighbourhood of Noyons. Armand had stepped



over his body, shouting to Sergeant Michel to keep his men together. It was strange that he should remember that boy's face now, years afterwards. It was the face of a peasant boy surprised by death—enormously surprised.

And he could remember going down into a cellar somewhere—the name of the village had clean gone—and finding a young mother lying there with her babe, both dead from poison gas. Some rats were gnawing at them. One of the rats had lost its tail. Yes, he remembered that. Perhaps its tail had been cut off by a shell splinter or a machine-gun bullet. . . .

It was when he was tired sometimes that these pictures thronged before his eyes, giving him such an illusion of actuality that he was startled when he came back to his work in hand, and found himself in this room at Avignon in civilian clothes, in time of peace.

He was working for peace. Ina von Menzel had asked him to work for peace, between her people and his. He was busy after midnight translating German correspondence for the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*. It might help a little. It might lead to comradeship between younger minds. The older minds were hopeless, mostly. Here in Avignon there was no sympathy for those peace societies of which he was a member. Those elderly officers and professors who came to his mother's salon on Sunday afternoons were contemptuous of the Society of Nations and any attempt to substitute international law for French supremacy in arms.

They jeered at Briand for his dream of a United States of Europe. They accused Herriot of corruption and cowardice for proposing a pact of mutual assistance and making concessions to Germany. They hated the English for refusing to maintain a military alliance with France. They despised the Americans for handing out moral precepts to Europe and refusing to accept any responsibility for French security. They were convinced in their souls that war was an

unavoidable necessity of human nature, and that for France there could be no enduring peace with a nation of barbarians across the Rhine. They would only have peace, they thought, as long as they could maintain it by superiority in arms.

Armand had argued with them now and then, until he realized that argument was useless with these traditional minds. He had had a sharp argument with Colonel François, a typical old cavalry officer.

"France," said Armand, "cannot afford to be drained of blood again. If there is another war with Germany, a nation of sixty millions compared with ours of forty, we shall be destroyed as a race. We shall have to import Poles and Italians and Czechs to till our deserted fields. Then where is France? No, no, *mon colonel*, let us avoid that next 'inevitable' war by international compacts and stronger support to the Society of Nations, and gradual disarmament all round. That is the best insurance policy for France, when it is upheld by common action by all nations against a violator of peace."

Colonel François was exceedingly annoyed.

"You are then a defeatist? General disarmament? You suggest that we should disarm down to the level of Germany and bare our throats to her butchers' knives?"

"We cannot keep Germany disarmed for ever, *mon colonel*," said Armand quietly. "A powerful nation like that cannot be held down in a state of inferiority to all her neighbours. I believe in equality of status, guaranteed by a general code of law supported by all nations."

"An illusion!" said Colonel François harshly. "A policy of cowardice. I am astounded at hearing such views from you, Gatières."

Armand endeavoured to explain his views. He only succeeded in making Colonel François more angry. He left the house abruptly and no longer called on Sunday afternoons, to the distress of Madame Gatières, who had an affection for him as an old friend.

Armand saw that his views on peace were painful to his mother. He avoided discussing them in her presence. She had lost her youngest son in the war—young Bertrand, whom she had petted—but her grief was assuaged by the pride that he had died for the victory of France.

The other mothers of dead boys in Avignon were equally comforted by this traditional pride in the valour of their sons, this traditional faith in the duty of all good Frenchmen to die for France. They lit their candles below the statue of Jeanne d'Arc, who had been the guardian angel of France before the throne of God. If another war happened they would pray again for the victory of France, and their prayers would be heard again, for France was always on the side of justice, and the defender of civilization.

No, it was no use arguing with his mother or her friends. Armand Gatières decided not to argue. If the conversation happened to touch upon international affairs, the latest default of Germany, the futility of the Society of Nations, the weakness, or worse, of M. Herriot and his radical socialists, Armand permitted himself only a slight irony of speech, or answered with a good-humoured smile. This peace work of his was his own secret task for midnight hours, and was addressed to the younger minds, less traditional, looking forward to some New Order in Europe.

## XXVI

Some of the elder students at the Lycée established a private friendship outside the class-rooms with their professor of history, before they passed on to the University of Aix-en-Provence or went into their fathers' businesses and professions, or were called up for their military service. On half-holidays several of them made a habit of spending an hour or two in his room at the top of the house in the rue du Château, where they were glad to smoke his *Gauloises bleues* and to talk

loudly and largely of life in all its aspects. He had a way with him which made them feel at ease. He had a sense of irony which they appreciated. Unlike most pedagogues, he seemed more pleased to listen to them—their crude ideas, their youthful exaggerations, their intellectual conflicts—than to express his own opinions or to lay down the law by reason of his age and superior knowledge. He talked to them on the level, so that they forgot his age and authority. He did not demand any cringing subservience, like M. Martin, their Director, who always spoke to them as though they were ignorant little beasts, not yet civilized or tamed, or like their master of mathematics, that repulsive fellow Barbier, who was always a bully with a grudge against them. This Captain Gatières, with his D'Artagnan face and slight limp, had a charming and courteous manner which was utterly without affectation, and it was almost impossible for any of them to take advantage of him by any deliberate lack of respect.

Armand himself delighted in their company. They were extraordinarily like the young soldiers who had been his comrades in the war, their elder brothers mostly. They had the same gaiety, the same *joie de vivre*, the same insolence towards life, and yet he saw some difference between them and that elder crowd which had so largely died. They were, he thought, more sceptical, more inclined to question authority and even to deny it. They took nothing, or very little, on faith. They had no innate allegiance to tradition or the laws of their elders. They were contemptuous of politicians and parties, and were for the most part extraordinarily cynical in their belief that any politician could be anything but corrupt and rotten with insincerity.

Sometimes there were heated arguments between them in which he took no part, or only held the balance when they became too extreme on either side. They fell naturally into two groups, two types, of a kind which symbolized the conflict of the larger world. There were those who believed

in the necessity of force—the power of the sword—and in the need of an intellectual aristocracy imposing its decisions upon the mass mind. They were inclined to be anti-Republican. Some of them were in favour of reviving the French monarchy. Others hankered after some form of French Fascism on the model of Italy. They were intolerant of machine-made progress on American lines. Sharply divided from them were the other types of mind, who believed in the democratic ideal, in some modern equivalent of Rousseau's Social Contract, in the progress of the masses towards a higher type of civilization, based upon equal rights and opportunities, with a control of the means of production and the distribution of wealth. They saw something in Communism adapted to French genius. They had vague and visionary ideas of a kind of new world in which the machine would do all the dirty work, leaving humanity to enjoy a spacious leisure.

Armand was amused and interested by these youthful debates in his room upstairs, which became foggy with cigarette-smoke, and noisy with the clamour of young voices. The subjects of discussion were not always so serious. They talked about the American tourists who invaded Avignon—hordes of elderly women who bought innumerable picture postcards; battalions of young girls who made free use of their lipsticks; coach-parties who were shouted at by men with megaphones outside the Palais des Papes. The general opinion of the Lycée students was that the Americans were a disgusting race. They also agreed that the English were equally revolting when seen in the mass. The abomination of these foreigners was only surpassed, they thought, by the Germans who had arrived in the South of France lately, and had the insolence—*le culot*—to talk German in the hearing of French ears.

"It is then apparent," said Armand, on one of these social afternoons, "that France possesses the only people who ought to be allowed to live in this rather beautiful world?"

"Undoubtedly," answered Louis Marchand, accepting this challenge with only an imperceptible smile. "We are the only civilized race."

"Then," said Armand, "we are in a somewhat perilous position, as a nation of forty millions in a world of God knows how many hundred millions! I forget the exact figures. What do you propose to do about it if the outer barbarians break in?"

"That is the tragedy of France," said Louis Marchand. "It is probable that we shall be submerged by the enemies of civilization. They have already broken down our defences by American film-pictures and mass-produced goods. Avignon is a suburb of New York. Paris is the backyard of Chicago. Our souls are already mortgaged to American bankers. We are chained to the chariot-wheels of international finance."

Armand shot a quick glance at this lad. He seemed to be talking seriously. He had probably heard something of the sort from his uncle, who was in the *Crédit Lyonnais*.

"The chains may break," he suggested. "In any case, *mon vieux*, we must accept the fact that time and distance are being annihilated. We cannot build a Chinese Wall round France."

"Why not?" asked Louis Marchand. "It's not a bad idea."

"Aeroplanes would fly over it. Wireless messages would come through it. Even the French mind would be penetrated by ideas from the outer world."

"Surely there are no ideas in the outer world?" asked Louis Marchand with mock simplicity. "Surely there are only stupidities."

"Then God must be a Frenchman!" exclaimed Armand, as though this were a new revelation which had just burst upon him.

A shout of laughter from the other students—six of them—put an end to that line of argument. They descended to the

salon, where Madame Gatières had provided some cakes for them with coffee. They were shy in her presence, but behaved very politely.

"They are nice boys," she said when they had gone. "One of them reminded me of our dear Bertrand. He had the same kind of smile, and held his cup in the same way, as though it might drop at any moment."

"I'm devoted to them," said Armand.

He only laughed when his mother accused him of a slight lack of dignity at times.

"You talk to them as though they knew as much as you do," she said; "as though their ideas were really worth hearing."

"I like to get their point of view," he answered. "In that way I am able to influence them a little. Besides, they say some good things now and then."

## XXVII

It was in this way that he became specially friendly with a boy named Alphonse Chartier, one of his most brilliant students. He was about seventeen when he first came into Armand's senior class, and showed a very keen interest in history from the philosophical point of view. He had an excellent poise and judgment for a boy of his age, and Armand was struck by his physical appearance and personality. He had a delicate clear-cut face which was almost feminine, but it was the delicacy of a cameo and not soft or flabby. There was something rather noble about him, very spiritual and fine. Although shy at first, he had a certain dignity and was essentially an aristocratic type. His father was a French cavalry officer stationed at Avignon, although originally of Tours, as Armand discovered in private conversation.

For the first few terms after his arrival in the senior class



Armand did not come much in contact with him, but was impressed by the boy's papers and by an occasional remark showing a keen appreciation of underlying tendencies of the period they were studying, which happened to be the time of the classical renaissance. Then one day he came to Armand's house with some of the other students for one of those informal conversations, and happened to notice some of Armand's sketches.

"Are those yours, sir?" he asked shyly.

Armand admitted that they were his—the daubs of an amateur, he called them.

The boy laughed at this description.

"I think they're marvellous. That little view of St. Paul de Vence—it's exquisite! I had a shot at it myself one day—with disastrous results!"

"You also are keen on sketching?"

"Impassioned. It is very amusing."

"We ought to go out together one day," suggested Armand, "if it wouldn't bore you too much. One needs a companion for one's expeditions. Perhaps Louis Marchand would join us?"

"That would be perfect," said Alphonse Chartier.

It was the beginning of a very pleasant comradeship which had a great influence upon Armand's future life. He was glad to have the friendship and devotion of this lad who seemed to him admirably representative of the youth which had been saved for France, highly intelligent, a *beau garçon*, keen and sensitive, with charming manners. He was touched that such a boy should care to walk with him—a battered veteran of war with a limp—and should seem keen to give up younger society to go sketching with him on half-holidays and in vacation time.

They went for expeditions together, with Louis Marchand or some other student, studying Roman remains and other antiquities, sketching scenes in the neighbourhood of Avignon—there was no lack of subjects!—and resting for an hour

or two after their labour in some pleasant café with a good view, where they talked about life, civilization, the ideal government, beauty, and art, and literature.

Alphonse Chartier and Louis Marchand were inseparable, in class and out, although of strongly different types, and their friendship with this professor of history brought them closer together. Alphonse Chartier was poetical, romantic, and religious. Louis Marchand was matter-of-fact, with the scientific mind, and sceptical. They quarrelled and argued interminably but without malice, and always with gaiety and good humour. Even as amateur artists their difference of character was strongly marked. Alphonse gave a touch of spirituality to anything he drew or painted. He had a sense of atmosphere which pervaded his work. Louis was hard, direct, and photographic, liking strong effects and brilliant colour.

Listening to these two lads, Armand Gatières, ex-captain of Chasseurs, felt alarmingly old sometimes, as he smoked his cigarettes in a wayside café, with a bottle of wine on the table and some sandwiches which they had brought with them to save expense.

They knew so little of life ! They hoped so much from it ! They were so flamingly intolerant of inevitable compromises ! They were so keen, enthusiastic, and confident of future happiness ! There were times when Armand felt a cynical, disillusioned man in their presence.

He was aware that these boys had a hero-worship for him of which he felt unworthy. Alphonse Chartier listened to anything he might say as though it contained enormous wisdom. It was absurdly obvious that this boy regarded him as the quintessence of chivalry and nobility. He was abashed sometimes by the worshipful look in his eyes. Louis, who was a plain-spoken fellow, did not conceal the admiration, which Alphonse Chartier hid as a secret not to be expressed in words.

"You know, *mon capitaine*," said Louis, one afternoon

after they had done some sketching, "we regard you as our spiritual guide and intellectual leader."

"Nonsense !" said Armand hastily. "I am a pettifogging schoolmaster. I have to mug up my books in order to keep level with you fellows."

Louis regarded that as a joke, and laughed heartily, but he explained that he was not talking of historical knowledge.

"It's because you have a personality unlike that of other professors. You allow us to talk the most outrageous nonsense without revealing impatience. It's because we can trust you as a friend who won't give us away. It's because we believe in your courage and idealism, and sense of honour, so unlike the sneaking characteristics of the usual pedagogue."

"My dear Louis, you embarrass me !" said Armand sincerely.

Alphonse Chartier blushed at these sentiments, blurted out so crudely by his comrade.

"Louis wears his heart on his sleeve," he said. "But we are grateful to you, sir, for taking an interest in us like this. It seems amazing that you should waste your time on us."

"My dear Chartier," said Armand, "I enjoy your company. It is I who have to be grateful for the friendship of the younger crowd, who must regard me as a battered veteran. But we must not exchange compliments like this ! It's quite unnecessary, I assure you."

"Tell us something about your experiences in the war," said Alphonse Chartier, noticing his embarrassment. "We know very little about what happened. I was very young when it finished."

"All I can remember about it was the death of my father," said Louis. "I was eating some bread and sugar in my nursery, and my mother was doing her needlework by the window. I remember quite well that I took some more sugar when she wasn't looking. Then the door opened and my grandfather came in. He looked very white and ill, and he was crying. I stared at him with my mouth open, because

until then I didn't know that a grandfather could cry. He went over to my mother, who dropped her needlework and stood up with a look of fear. 'What is it, Grandfather?' she asked. He took her hands and kissed them, and then she seemed to know that something bad had happened. She gave a cry which frightened me, and fell forward into Grandfather's arms. Afterwards I knew my father had been killed at Verdun. But I didn't mind very much, I must say. I had almost forgotten him because he had been away so long."

"Tell us the story about the marble Venus," said Alphonse Chartier. "Some of the fellows were talking about it the other day. They said it was one of your bravest exploits."

"It was one of those days when I was most afraid," said Armand, in his usual way when questioned about his war adventures.

Now and again he yielded to their request for some light on the war, more than they could find in back numbers of *L'Illustration* and in the casual remarks of elderly men who no longer talked about it much.

"Can you bear to hear a few horrors?" he asked.

"You could bear to suffer them," said Alphonse Chartier.

He spared them the worst horrors. He could not bring himself to mention them. But he thought it well now and then to let these boys know what war is, stripped of all false glamour and romantic heroism. He described his first experiences at Souchez and Neuville St. Vaast, when advancing waves of French youth were mown down by machine-guns and annihilated by high explosives. He told them about a night raid on the enemy trenches, when his company was suddenly revealed by Very lights, and when only he and Sergeant Michel remained alive. He allowed himself to go rather far in gruesome details of what happened at Verdun in a fort which was the target of German guns for seven days and nights.

"Can men suffer all that and still remain sane?" asked Louis.

"Some of them don't remain sane," answered Armand. "Some of them go raving mad. There was a lad from Avignon . . ."

He told them about that lad from Avignon who went raving mad. It was not a pleasant story. He was sorry afterwards that he had told it. Alphonse Chartier had gone as pale as death. He looked as though he were going to faint. Armand noticed that he poured himself out a glass of wine and raised it to his lips with an unsteady hand. It was on a golden afternoon when they were sitting in a café garden, looking across to the broken bridge of Avignon from the other side of the river.

"I'm sorry," said Armand. "I didn't mean to talk like that. I've been wallowing in filth and horror. It surged up from my subconscious mind where it ought to lie buried. A thousand pardons, my dear Chartier."

Chartier put down his glass and smiled faintly.

"Not at all, sir! We ought to know these things. They are not mentioned in official speeches at the foot of war memorials."

"By ridiculous old men who stayed behind the lines," said Louis, "and talk about the glorious duty of dying for *la patrie*!"

Alphonse was silent for a few moments, and then asked a grave question.

"Are we going to allow those things to happen again?"

"We must try to prevent them," said Armand.

Louis shrugged his shoulders.

"In my opinion they are inevitable. There were six thousand wars in Europe before the last. Doubtless there will be six thousand more, until the human race has exterminated itself and ended this almighty joke called life."

Armand smiled at him.

"You do not believe, then, in the progress of human intelligence?"

"I see no signs of it, *mon capitaine*. It is true that we three

are intelligent. But we are rare specimens of our species! In the mass mankind revolts against intelligence. It is incurably foolish. Man is a stupid animal."

"And yet," said Armand, "there is a certain amount of law and order in civilized nations. We are not allowed to take the law into our own hands. Society protects itself against the law-breaker. The individual supports the law for his self-preservation. Isn't it possible to establish such a code between nations?"

"In my opinion impossible," said Louis in his blunt way. "There is race rivalry. There is national pride. There are inherited hatreds, as between ourselves and Germany."

"They are not laws of Nature," said Armand. "They are rather recent, historically. There was no intense nationalism before the Reformation. There was a certain European unity and culture to which all peoples had a moral allegiance. The Catholic faith took over the heritage of the Roman Empire. It did actually establish spiritual unity over all Christendom, in spite of revolts and conflicts which were in the nature of civil war. Germany was not a nation until 1870, but a collection of independent kingdoms. Italy was not a nation until Garibaldi came, with his red-shirts. France, even, was not a nation as we now think of it until Richelieu's time. In the Middle Ages scholars travelled from one part of Europe to another without a sense of crossing frontiers and being strangers in an alien land. The Latin tongue, their scholarship, and their Christian philosophy made them welcome at all universities and wherever knowledge was revered. Don't you agree? This intense national egotism and jealousy is of recent growth. By an effort of intelligence we could break it down and re-establish unity for the defence of European civilization and its heritage of ideas and beauty. Surely?"

"An illusion!" said Louis. "It couldn't happen without a miracle."

"I believe in miracles," answered Armand, with a smile.

"They are happening every day. The wireless, aeroplanes, scientific marvels altering human society and its relationships. In any case, my dear Louis, I am convinced that if we do not re-establish some kind of European unity our culture and our traditions will be utterly destroyed. Another war—and they are gone! It will be the final collapse of Western civilization."

Louis was doubtful about that. Europe had recovered from many wars, including the Napoleonic campaigns.

Armand shook his head.

The scale had been altered. Waterloo was a small affair compared with a modern battle. And another element had been introduced. War was no longer a test of human courage. It was no longer a struggle between human beings. It was the letting loose of devilish and inhuman powers under which men crouched and died. Science had elaborated a mechanism of slaughter more destructive than the thunderbolts of Jove. In the next war, cities would be obliterated by bombs. Masses of human beings would be put to death by poison gas. It would be the suicide of civilization.

"An unpleasant prospect for young lives like mine," agreed Louis, with an attempt at humour. "And I want to do so much. I want to fall in love with a pretty girl. I want lots of pretty girls to fall in love with me. I want to paint some fairly good pictures. I want to make a success in the law. I want to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of life. I should hate to be blotted out in an untimely way by high explosives or poison gas. Still, I don't see there's anything I can do about it."

"Why not?" asked Armand dryly. "It's up to you."

Louis raised his eyebrows.

"You suggest, sir, that I might prevent that catastrophe? Me—Louis Marchand, student of letters in the Lycée of Avignon?"

"Certainly," said Armand. "You and Alphonse Chartier and others of your age. It is for your generation to get busy

and break down this sense of inevitability of another European war. It is your responsibility. If you like you can be the leaders of a new mentality in France and in the world; which will regard war as a stupid way of argument and ridiculously old-fashioned."

"You put too much upon my young shoulders," said Louis, making a grimace. "I do not feel inspired with the spirit of leadership. How do you feel, my dear Alphonse? Are you ready to tilt at windmills like the immortal Don Quixote?"

Alphonse Chartier had been rather silent, as usual. He had listened to Armand's words with intense interest, and with eyes so luminous that there seemed to be a spiritual flame behind them.

He spoke now to Armand, without answering his friend.

"*Mon capitaine*, I should be glad to hear of any way in which you think we might work for peace. It is not because I am a coward, or afraid of being mutilated or blinded, that I hate the idea of war. I still think that one ought to die very willingly for France, if need be, just as one would die for one's mother if attacked. That is in my blood, I suppose. All my people have been professional soldiers for some time back. And in any case one has certain principles of honour."

"Not in my case, I'm afraid," said Louis, with his blunt honesty of speech. "I was not born with that instinct strongly developed, as you may have learnt by the way in which I helped myself to sugar that day my father was killed. But continue, my child. Let us hear your noble ideas, so that we may disagree with them."

Alphonse Chartier laughed nervously, and blushed like a schoolgirl.

"Oh, I'm not posing as a noble character. But I agree with Captain Gatières that science has made war too great an ordeal for mankind, and that in any case it is unintelligent. I should like to know how fellows like ourselves—schoolboys,



really—could help to form public opinion and establish more civilized ideals.”

Armand put his hand into one of his pockets and drew out a folded leaflet. It was an article about the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*. He had written it for the committee in Paris. It had been translated into German by Otto von Menzel, and published in *Der Friede* by Gustav Hoffmann.

“You might have a look at this,” he said. “It suggests one way in which intelligence is getting to work across the frontiers of hatred.”

They had a look at it, and Alphonse Chartier asked permission to keep it. It was a week later when both he and Louis came to him with the request that they might be enrolled as members.

## XXVIII

The hero-worship of Alphonse Chartier for his professor of history did not go unnoticed. Some of his fellow students chaffed him about it, and one of them, who was indiscreet enough to call it “a love-affair between Mademoiselle Chartier and Captain Gatières”, had a severe thrashing from the subject of his satire. Armand’s mother also noticed the devotion of the boy for her son, and was slightly anxious about it. She gave a word of warning to Armand himself, and begged him not to show any favouritism to this romantic-looking young man. It might lead to jealousy among the other boys and perhaps even to scandal among people of unpleasant minds. She remembered a case in Avignon in which a student of the Lycée had committed suicide because of over-sentimentality in relation to one of the masters.

“Boys are very delicate machines,” she told her son with a smile. “I happen to know, because you were not an easy problem yourself, Armand. Do you remember that love-affair with Suzanne Lajeunesse? You were only sixteen,

and when Suzanne preferred the favours of another boy you fell into such a black despair that you frightened me !”

Armand laughed at this reminiscence, which he remembered perfectly. But he pooh-poohed the idea of any romantic nonsense with Alphonse Chartier. He had to admit that the boy had an exaggerated admiration for him. Lately he had painted a portrait of Armand from sketches done surreptitiously in class, and had idealized him so that he looked more like a hero than he had ever imagined himself. It was really ridiculous !

But this friendship with young Chartier was very pleasant. It was on a purely intellectual basis. The boy had an unusual mind—over-sensitive to the cruelties and vulgarities of life, perhaps—but fine and spiritual. He belonged to the stuff of life which had made saints and martyrs in the age of faith, ready to die for a principle or a creed. Armand believed that he might be one of the leaders of young France later on.

Madame Gatières ventured to give another warning to a son who was rather eccentric in his ideas and careless of the usual relationship between masters and students.

“Armand, you never say much now about your political convictions—I mean about peace and disarmament. But I hope you are not using your influence with the boys to teach them pacifism and that kind of thing? I could not help being worried about something I heard you say the other day to this young Chartier.”

“What kind of thing?” asked Armand carelessly.

“It was about the *Ligue des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*. It seemed to me that you had persuaded the boy to join that association.”

“Not at all, *chère Maman*,” said Armand. “He joined of his own free will, without the slightest persuasion from me. On the contrary, I warned him that he might get into trouble with his father—one of the militarists.”

Madame Gatières put her hand on her son’s arm.

"Armand, I am rather nervous about it. I wish you wouldn't have these strange ideas about international peace. They seem so disloyal to France. You are constantly saying unkind things about M. Poincaré—or at least hinting a contempt for him when our friends mention his name. I am sure M. Poincaré has only the interests of France at heart. We ought to be very grateful to him for such noble leadership. Didn't he save the country in a time of crisis?"

Armand patted his mother's hand. It was no use arguing with her about Poincaré or international peace. She didn't understand his point of view. Her traditions were too strong for argument. Her faith was too inflexible. She was convinced that France was very safe in the hands of God, Jeanne d'Arc, and Monsieur Poincaré.

"*Chère Maman*," he said gently, "there is no need for worry, I assure you. My League of Youth is a most innocent society without any revolutionary objects. That boy Alphonse Chartier is a very good Catholic, and there is nothing against his faith in his membership of this association. On the contrary, he believes that it is a very Christian work. Didn't Jesus Christ say 'Blessed are the peacemakers'?"

"But not with evil-doers, my dear," said Madame Gatières. "There can be no peace with evil, surely?"

Armand agreed. But it might be possible now and then to convert the evil minds! In any case he was not exercising any malign influence over his young students. He could give her his word of honour about that.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing sinister in the objects and activities of the *Ligue des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*, and he was extremely pleased when Alphonse Chartier and Louis Marchand became very keen about it and did some propaganda of their own among their fellow students, of whom some fifteen or sixteen applied for membership. They held meetings after school hours, to which he was invited now and again. It developed into a friendly debating society on international affairs, and the work of the Society of Nations.

Louis Marchand, who had a gift of leadership, generally took the chair and was very humorous in the mock gravity and severity with which he exercised his authority.

Young Chartier was the orator. He had a natural eloquence, combined with a charm of manner—serious, persuasive, idealistic—which was acknowledged by the other students, mostly of rougher type, but fascinated by the admirable style and fervour of this young leader. Armand himself was greatly touched and impressed. The boy spoke with knowledge as well as conviction. He studied his brief by keeping abreast with the international situation as far as he could by newspaper reading and articles in serious publications, like the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Journal des Débats*. Some of his phrases and similes were striking, and Armand noted them down for his own use. His shyness and self-consciousness disappeared when he had been on his feet for a few minutes. He had a charming grace of gesture, and with his fine, delicate face and dark hair falling over one side of his forehead, looked like one of the young Girondins of the French Revolution—Barbaroux, for example, who “was young and beautiful in manhood”, according to the history of his time and his portrait in the Musée Carnavalet. Armand made a pencil sketch of the lad at this time, as he stood talking one day with the light from the window touching his profile. He hung it up in his study, next to a photograph of Bertrand, his young brother who was killed in the war.

The Director of the Lycée, M. Martin, made some inquiries about this new debating society.

“It is not, I hope, of a revolutionary character?” he asked one afternoon when he was alone with Armand. “I cannot tolerate any Communistic propaganda in the Lycée. That microbe is poisoning many French minds, but my students will not be allowed to spread the infection.”

“No need to worry, sir,” said Armand. “The boys are only debating international affairs and the problems which come before the Society of Nations.”

"Very dangerous!" said M. Martin harshly. "The Society of Nations is a farce and an illusion."

"M. Herriot and M. Paul-Boncour do not seem to think so," said Armand carelessly.

"You mention two *farceurs*," answered M. Martin angrily. "Paul-Boncour—a play-actor—a mountebank! As for Herriot, I am convinced that he will lead France to disaster and defeat. He is prepared to sacrifice security for peace pacts which do not guarantee our frontiers. The Locarno Pact, for example—a trick of the English to avoid their obligations to France."

The argument became rather heated, until Armand turned it off by a few good-humoured words. This Director was a man of narrow prejudices and harshly intolerant of new ideas. It was not worth while discussing serious problems with him. It was fortunate that he did not feel it his duty to suppress the new debating club instituted by the members of the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*.

Perhaps if he had attended some of their meetings he might have been less assured of its harmless and academic purpose. Some of the young speakers went rather far in their new fervour for pacifism—farther than Armand himself was prepared to go.

Young Chartier had a habit of lingering after class hours in order to have the privilege of walking home with his professor of history. He adjusted his pace to the limp of an ex-captain of Chasseurs wounded in the war. Occasionally they halted in front of a printshop or examined second-hand books on the stalls. More often than not the boy invited his professor to an *apéritif* on the *terrasse* of a café, as an excuse for ten minutes' talk about the international situation, or some historical point which had cropped up in class.

It was a comradeship which Armand enjoyed. After a year or so there was an intellectual intimacy between this boy and the elder man which had broken down the difference in years and experience. They were like an elder and a

younger brother, and Alphonse confided to him many things which he kept secret even from Louis Marchand, his best comrade—his ideals, his hopes, his youthful enthusiasm for beauty and poetry. He confessed one day that there was an unbridgeable gulf between him and his father.

"It is extraordinary," he said, "but my father and I sit at table like strangers. I think we are shy of each other."

"It often happens like that between father and son."

Alphonse Chartier was astonished that it should be so.

"I have a great admiration for him, and I think he is devoted to me, and yet we simply can't talk to each other except about trivialities! There is a kind of inhibition on both sides. I could no more discuss the ideals of beauty and art with him than I could strip myself naked on the Place du Château before the American tourists."

"There is always a gulf between the two generations," said Armand.

Alphonse shook his head.

"That doesn't explain it quite. I can say anything to you. And yet you are a middle-aged man."

That was rather a blow. Armand Gatières was a man of thirty-five. He did not feel middle-aged. Sometimes he felt as young as Alphonse Chartier and his fellow students. The war years did not seem to count. They were nightmare years—a bad dream—between the rest of his life before and afterwards.

"My father," said Alphonse, not aware of the dagger he had stuck into the heart of his friend, "would very much like to meet you one day."

"*Enchanté!*" said Armand.

"He has some rather fine old books," said Alphonse. "He wants to show them to you, if it wouldn't bore you too much."

"I should be very much interested."

"There is also my sister Yvonne," said Alphonse. "She has heard a lot about you from me and is extremely anxious to meet you."

"She will be disillusioned," answered Armand with a smile.

Alphonse laughed and shook his head.

"I don't think so. . . . But, in any case, you may like to have a look at her. She is not too bad-looking."

"As you know," said Armand, "I am a lover of beauty."

But he had no idea then that he would become the lover of Yvonne Chartier.

## XXIX

Undoubtedly she was not too bad-looking. She was, in fact, beautiful, with a charming freshness and gaiety. Like her brother Alphonse, she was of an aristocratic type, if one may still mention such a thing in this democratic world. Perhaps that is an illusion and a snobbishness. Perhaps any peasant girl of good stock, born of good-looking parents, would have been as graceful and elegant if brought up in the same way as Yvonne Chartier, carefully nurtured in a house filled with treasures of art, in an atmosphere of dignity and tradition, from which any touch of vulgarity was banished, and with a family pride in good manners, perfect form, and social graciousness. Yet heredity counts for something in human beings as in racehorses. Armand could see heredity in Alphonse Chartier and his sister.

Their father, to whom he was introduced on his first visit, was a man of distinguished presence—the best type of cavalry officer—yet with something more than that in personality. His loose moustache, growing a little grey, was fluffed out below his straight firm nose. His cleft chin was strong. His brown eyes were thoughtful, a little dreamy in repose, yet alert and humorous when he spoke. He looked as though he might be very stern at times, if discipline were needed, or if anyone challenged some fixed principle or point of honour in his code.

Madame Chartier, who came from an old and noble

family of Touraine, was delicate and reserved. From her Alphonse had inherited his finely cut face, like a Greek cameo, and his luminous eyes.

Yvonne startled Armand by the beauty she owed to both these parents. She had her father's brown eyes, and his short, straight nose, and firm lips; but she had her mother's delicacy of colouring, though with the health of youth, and her mother's fineness and slenderness. There the likeness to both of them ceased, because she had a strong personality of her own, a swift grace of movement, little gestures and mannerisms which were individual, and a feminine allure which belonged to herself alone, though, perhaps, due a little to some link with the past, with great-uncles and great-aunts, or great-great-grandfathers and grandmothers, whose portraits were on the walls of this house in Avignon. Her mother's ancestry was illustrious in Touraine. In the Revolution several of them had gone to the guillotine, and one of them was a lady painted by Boucher in her youth—Madeleine de la Bedoyère—in whom Armand saw some far distant reminiscence of this living and laughing girl who showed him the family pictures.

On the first visit, when Alphonse had left the room for a moment, Colonel Chartier thanked Armand courteously for taking an interest in his son.

"It is a case of hero-worship," he said. "My wife tells me that he is devoted to you."

Madame Chartier confirmed this very graciously.

"Alphonse often speaks about you. I am very glad he is under such a good influence. I don't want to be unkind, but nowadays the character of some of our teachers is not above suspicion. I am told that there are even Communists among them, who deliberately inject their poison into young minds. It is too horrible to think about."

Armand agreed that it was horrible. He had no sympathy with Bolshevism.

"Any fellow caught teaching that filth ought to be tried

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and shot," said Colonel Chartier, and Armand was aware of the sternness that could suddenly dispel the dreamy look in his hazel-coloured eyes.

"I am sure Captain Gatières does not want to talk politics, Papa," said Yvonne. "May I show him the family portraits? He is an artist, you know, as well as a professor of history. Alphonse tells me he is a marvellous painter."

Armand laughed, and was conscious of a slight increase in colour.

"I am afraid your brother exaggerates my qualities," he said. "It's the enthusiasm of youth."

"I believe everything he tells me about you," she assured him gaily. "Here he comes, looking very happy to have you here."

That was on his first visit, from which he went away with very agreeable impressions of a charming family. That girl Yvonne, he thought, was extremely attractive, and of a type unusual in Avignon. Her school in Paris no doubt accounted for her lack of self-consciousness and ease of manner. She was two years older than Alphonse, but was much older than that in self-possession and social knowledge. She was already a woman while her brother was still a boy.

She was very kind to Armand. That was astonishing. At least, he was astonished and touched that she should take so much trouble to interest and amuse him. Her comments on the pictures and relics of her mother's family were witty and entirely lacking in snobbishness.

"Blue blood," she said, "does not often get as far as the head. I am sure that some of these people were extraordinarily stupid. Look at the old General of the time of Louis Seize. I am sure he ate too much! I am sure that he loved a horse more than a book. He was probably illiterate."

She confided to him that there was a crowd of relatives in Touraine who were rather trying—uncles and aunts and second cousins, all very poor but all very proud. She had stayed with some of them. They still regarded the *Marseillaise*

as a revolutionary air. They still yearned after the Bourbons. They hated motor-cars and cinemas. They kept their minds in retreat from modernity as they kept their clothes in lavender.

"Nevertheless," she added with a laugh, "I am also sufficiently snobbish to cherish the traditions of a family which, after all, has stood for something in France. I suppose it's in the blood. I can't help myself."

There was a formal interchange of visits. Madame Chartier called on Madame Gatières. Madame Gatières called on Madame Chartier. Yvonne was asked to tea with her brother. Armand Gatières and his mother were invited to dinner, which they understood perfectly was a very special favour, as few people in Avignon entertained their friends in a formal way like that. Colonel Chartier sat over the port wine with Armand, and Alphonse was allowed the privilege of a cigar, which, as he afterwards confessed to his professor of history, made him feel very unwell. Colonel Chartier was good enough to describe his experiences in Morocco and to give a character study of Marshal Lyautey, whom he regarded as one of the greatest men ever produced by France. It was, perhaps, a little wearying after forty-five minutes. Alphonse, watching Armand Gatières, smiled once or twice during his father's monologue, and on the way to the salon whispered a word or two.

"My father takes himself very seriously!"

"Why not?" asked Armand. "It is an excellent quality."

Yvonne asked permission to join some of their sketching excursions, and being in her brother's company there was no objection, it seemed, from high quarters. They spent a pleasant day in Arles, and made a sketch of the amphitheatre. They made another expedition to Les Baux, and Yvonne was enchanted with these old ruins, which she explored with excitement. She was grateful, she said, to Captain Gatières for making them come alive and peopling them with old ghosts.

It was her expression of gratitude which abashed him.

"*Ciel!*" he exclaimed. "I have been talking like a pedagogue! It is unpardonable."

"On the contrary!" cried Yvonne. "It is fascinating. You know so much, and you make it all so thrilling and romantic."

Young Chartier was pleased with this praise of his hero.

"Now you will believe me when I tell you that Captain Gatières inspires one with the historical sense."

"But I have never disbelieved!" said Yvonne. "How dare you suggest that I have been sceptical about his inspiration?"

"You suggested that I wrote too much about him when you were in Paris. You laughed at my enthusiasm."

Yvonne flushed slightly.

"What a schoolboy you are, Alphonse, in spite of the noble airs you give yourself! You have no tact. You give me away hopelessly. You make me blush."

"Modern women can't blush," said Alphonse. "That habit went out with crinolines."

They were very young. Yvonne, who looked so much older than her brother and had attained the elegance of womanhood before her years, was not above running a race with him across the smooth grass which was once the courtyard of a great castle. She dared him to climb to the topmost turret, which was not an easy feat above an avalanche of ruin. She was there first. Alphonse gave up the chase, and sat with his legs over the lower terrace, looking across the flat plain where many a knight had ridden on a tired horse, where many a minstrel had trudged with a poem in his empty wallet, where the dust of a winding road had whitened the tunics of men-at-arms and the sun of Provence had glinted on their steel helmets.

Armand, with his limp, had climbed after Yvonne over the ruins and up a stone stairway where there was no rail guarding a far drop. Yvonne held out her hand to him.

"Catch hold!" she cried.

He held her hand, and she helped him up the last steps. "It's my old wound," he explained. "I can't hop about as quickly as I used to."

"Where did you get hit?" she asked.

"Verdun."

She still held his hand, and while holding it made a little curtsey in an old-fashioned way, as one of the ghost ladies of Les Baux might have curtseyed to a knight.

"I salute a hero of Verdun!" she said. "How brave you must have been. How proud I am to stand here with a man who suffered so much for France!"

She had laughing eyes, and yet was serious. She was play-acting a little, and yet meant her homage to him.

"Gracious lady," said Armand, playing up to her mood, "I am a poor and beggarly knight, broken in the wars. But all my wounds are healed by the balm of your charity."

"Most valiant knight," said Yvonne, "stand by my side and tell me all your doughty deeds. How many dragons and devils did you slay at Verdun?"

He wouldn't talk about Verdun in the beauty of this afternoon at Les Baux, on the ramparts there with this charming girl. He spoke instead of the troubadours and their court of love. He recited bits of their ballads in old French.

"That is exquisite!" cried Yvonne, after he had spoken a line or two of a virelay of the fourteenth century. "Say those lines again!"

He said them again :

"Sui-je, sui-je, sui-je belle ?  
Il me semble à mon avis  
Que j'ay beau front et doulz viz,  
Et la bouche vermeillette :  
Dites moy si je sui belle ?

"J'ay vers yeux, petits sourcis,  
Le chief blond, le nez traitis,  
Ront menton, blanche gorgette :  
Sui-je, sui-je, sui-je belle ?"

"Remember some more for me !" she pleaded. "It is so pleasant to stand here while you recite the very lines which charmed the ears of our forefathers six hundred years ago. Perhaps they are listening to you. Perhaps as we stand here there is a crowd of ghosts about us—princesses and pretty ladies—some of them very sad, perhaps, because love has gone and beauty has faded, and there is no more romance."

He remembered some more—a few lines :

*"Rians vairs yeulx, qui mon cuer avez pris  
Par vos regars pleins de laz amoureux,  
A vous me rens, si me tiens eureux  
D'estre pour vous si doucement surpris.*

*"On ne pourroit sommer le très grant pris  
De vos grans biens qui tant sont savoureux  
Rians vairs yeulx, qui mon cuer avez pris."*

He looked at her with a smile as he recited those old lines, written five hundred years before, and he was surprised and touched to see her eyes wet with tears.

"It is as though time had travelled backwards," she said. "You and I are in the fourteenth century. You are truly a French knight, and I am your lady. Listen ! There is a horn blowing. It is magic !"

It was a horn blown to call the cattle home, down there in the fields, and presently Alphonse shouted up to them.

"*Holla*, there ! Aren't you coming down, you people ? I'm getting lonely."

There were other days like this in the long vacation. Armand was happy in the company of this boy and girl. They seemed glad of his friendship. He was enchanted by Yvonne, whose grace, whose laughter, whose flattery, whose allurements, were very pleasant to a man who had an eye for beauty. She flattered his vanity by her homage to his "heroism" in the war and his historical knowledge, which he had picked up in old books, and his gifts—not very marvellous !—as an amateur artist. She flirted with him a little and he liked it, being human.

It was astonishing and altogether delightful that a beautiful creature like this, in the first bloom of young womanhood, should think it worth while to flirt with a fellow like him, fifteen years older than herself, scarred by war wounds, in his mind as well as in his body. He thought it very gracious of her. He was humbly grateful for the privilege.

But he was astounded—stupefied—by some words blurted out one day by Alphonse. It was the day before this lad was due to leave Avignon for his first term at the university of Aix-en-Provence. He was rather sentimental about it. He hated the idea, he said, of leaving the Lycée and missing the friendship and inspiration of his teacher.

"I shall feel that I've lost the best years of life," he said from the depths of a chair in Armand's study. "I can never tell you how much I owe to you. Your friendship with me has altered my whole character and given me a different philosophy of life. I shall be terribly lonely at that infernal Aix, without seeing you for months at a time."

Armand was touched at this devotion, but laughed it away, because it was slightly embarrassing.

"My dear Alphonse, you exaggerate my influence. As for loneliness—you will have Louis up there with you. You will find that Professor Julien knows ten times more history than I shall ever learn."

They talked for a while about other young men who were already at Aix. Then Alphonse became restless and wandered round the room, looking at some of Armand's sketches. Among them was a pencil drawing of his sister Yvonne. He stared at it with a smile about his lips, and then turned and blurted out those words which astounded his professor of history, stupefied him.

"I expect you will be seeing a good deal of Yvonne. I suppose you know she has lost her heart to you? She's ready to jump into your arms if you give her the chance."

Armand turned rather pale. He felt his heart do something queer against his left ribs. After a moment of

intense silence he laughed rather harshly, and spoke nervously.

"My dear friend ! You really ought not to say things like that. So utterly fantastic. So—idiotic."

Alphonse flushed slightly at these words, and then laughed shyly.

"They're true, all the same ! I don't see why you shouldn't know. I would very much like to have you as a brother-in-law."

Armand was greatly disturbed. He felt a slight perspiration break out in the palms of his hands. That was a symptom which had happened to him in war time when he was in the presence of high explosives unpleasantly near. The beginning of fear.

He grabbed hold of the boy's arm and held it tight in an iron grip.

"You're a scoundrel !" he said, laughing uneasily. "You're chaffing a comical pedagogue as your final revenge for all his boring lectures."

"Not at all," said Alphonse. "I'm giving you a little private information which, after all, you might have guessed. Yvonne is frightfully 'gone' on you. She told me so last night. She thinks you're the noblest of men—the most heroic—the most adorable. To put it briefly, she loves you, *mon capitaine*."

"No, no !" said Armand. "It is absurd. It is unbelievable. It is impossible."

He refused to talk about it any more. He talked intently about other things. He tried to pretend that he was extremely interested in the syllabus of studies in the honours section at Aix. He smoked an incredible number of *Gauloises bleues*. His hand was shaking slightly when he lit another, before Alphonse Chartier said good-bye.

That night he was very wakeful, thinking about those words which Alphonse had said to him. They disturbed him profoundly. They were especially disturbing because several

times lately he had been aware of emotional symptoms in the presence of Yvonne Chartier. When she flirted with him a little he had become nervous and not quite master of himself. The touch of her hand when he had held it to say good night after a visit to her father's house, an evening or two ago, had lingered too long in his mind. Over his papers at night her beauty had come between him and his work. He had warned himself not to see so much of her, and then had accepted the next chance of seeing her for a long day with Alphonse at Tarascon.

In the castle grounds there they had sat on a grass slope and she had slipped her hand through his arm as though he were an elder brother, and he had felt the spell of her loveliness. He had watched her standing alone while Alphonse had taken a snapshot of her under an old archway. She had an elegance and a grace which, as an artist, an amateur artist, he found admirable. She was, he thought then, a type which was getting rare. It belonged to the days of the Valois. She was a hark-back to the princesses of France, with a gay simplicity, proud, finely bred, yet with something of the peasant in her. He imagined her as one of the ladies of Marguerite de Navarre, laughing, amorous, brave, perhaps a little cruel. In fact, he had thought many silly things in that moment or two when he watched her standing alone under the old archway.

And that day at Les Baux, when she had given him her hand to help him up the rocks and he had recited bits of old French poems, he had been overwhelmed for a moment or two by sentiment, by foolish yearning for love, by a desire—unpardonable—to take this girl in his arms and to kiss her mouth. Unpardonable and abominable, he thought afterwards, ashamed of this weakness. She was a child in years compared with him. Her family was above his own social class. She was the sister of one of his students. He was just a schoolmaster, and rather withered.

In any case, he was a sworn bachelor. Had he not declared this to his mother a score of times? Had he not



made a pledge in his own heart, in memory of a German girl who had offered him her love and then had died?

Ina . . . Ina von Menzel. . . .

That episode at Mainz was like a dream now. It had happened several years ago, for time had slipped by. He had never been quite sure that he had been in love with her. He had been a miserable Romeo to her dear Juliet! But he would remember her always with tenderness and grief. He would always be a bachelor because of this spiritual loyalty. Always, though he had a passionate desire sometimes for a child of his own, and was a sentimental fellow who needed the love of women.

Yvonne was enchanting, and very alluring to a man of his temperament.

### XXX

It was only two days after Alphonse had gone to Aix that Armand had a conversation with Yvonne which broke down his guard beyond all sense of caution. She came round to call on his mother. That was what she told him, when he came down from his study to the salon after Madeleine, their servant, had announced this visitor.

"Madeleine tells me your mother is out," said Yvonne, "but I thought I would stay a few minutes to take shelter from that abominable mistral."

"Excellent idea!" said Armand. His eyes were shy with her, because of what her brother had said—those stupefying words.

"Doubtless I interrupt your work," said Yvonne, smiling into his shy eyes.

"I like to be interrupted," he told her. "Would you by any chance like a cup of tea? It is an English habit imported by my sister Lucille."

"I should adore a cup of tea," said Yvonne.

It all seemed very safe. It was certainly very pleasant.

Yvonne talked about her brother. She proposed to visit him in Aix from time to time. One of her aunts was there in an old house furnished with moth-eaten tapestries and chairs which had been sat upon by eighteenth-century ancestors, and cabinets in which they had kept their porcelain from Sèvres.

"Alphonse was broken-hearted at leaving you," said Yvonne. "You are his hero."

Armand laughed at this exaggeration.

"I am the most unheroic man alive!" he protested. "But youth idealizes its friends."

"You are too modest, *mon capitaine*," said Yvonne. "Everyone knows that you are one of the heroes of the war."

"That is a legend. That is a myth," said Armand. "I loathed the war. I was always a timid fellow."

Yvonne laughed.

"The bravest men are always the most shy," she said. "You have shy eyes, *mon capitaine*. You are a little shy of me, are you not? That seems to me very strange."

"It is very natural," he replied, feeling even more shy.

"But why?" she asked. "There is nothing alarming about a girl like me, straight from school in Paris. Tell me why you are shy of me."

"Because I am human," he said. "And because a professor of history has to be careful in the presence of a young woman who is extremely beautiful!"

The situation was becoming very dangerous after all. That last speech of his was excessively foolish. But she seemed to like it. There was a dancing light in her eyes.

"Do you think me beautiful?" she asked.

"Enchantingly beautiful," he told her, conscious of his own weakness.

"And is that why you have to be careful? Is beauty so dangerous to a professor of history?"

"Alas, yes!" said Armand. "A poor pedagogue!"

She held out her hand to him across the tea-table.

"There is no need to be careful," she said. "You can have my beauty if you like. I love you very much. And I know that Alphonse has told you so. Need we pretend?"

He could not pretend. This offer of her beauty was too much for him. He desired her beauty. He loved her mind and her spirit. He had loved her from the moment when he had first seen her in her father's house. But he had been afraid. She was so young, so much beyond him and above him. He was afraid now, even as he kissed her hands.

"Is it possible that you will be my wife?" he asked.

"It is perfectly possible," she told him, "if you love me."

"It's incredible," he said, holding her in his arms. "I am a professor of history. I am old enough to be your father. I am thirty-six."

"What a very young father for a grown-up woman!" she exclaimed. "You are only old enough to be wiser than younger men."

"I walk with a limp," he reminded her.

"When you walk with a limp I remember that you walked into the fires of Verdun."

"What will your father say?" he asked. "And you mother?"

She was quite sure that her father would be very pleased to have such a nice son-in-law. She was equally certain that her mother would be charmed and delighted.

And, indeed, she was right.

That evening after dinner he mustered up courage to tell his mother this astounding news, and then was surprised that it did not seem to astonish her. She had already discussed the matter in a quiet way with Madame Chartier, who had noticed many weeks ago that her daughter was very much *éprise* with Captain Gatières. She approved of such a marriage entirely. It was for that reason she had encouraged the young people to see each other so much. Colonel Chartier had been taken into her confidence. He saw no reasonable objection to the marriage if it should take place.

Madame Gatières had discussed the details of such an alliance. Her son was not dependent upon the Lycée for his livelihood. His father had left a sufficient competence for both of them. Upon her death Armand would be quite independent of the professorship.

Colonel Chartier was entirely satisfied that his daughter would be well provided for. It was a great satisfaction to him, he said, that Yvonne had set her heart upon a man who had behaved with great valour during the war, and who was not one of those young puppies—the gigolo type—which had been produced in such numbers by the post-war morality, or immorality. They had penetrated even as far as Avignon. They made Paris disgusting.

Colonel Chartier called upon Armand and repeated some of these utterances. He shook hands with him very warmly, and once patted him on the shoulder.

"I shall be proud to have you as a son-in-law. Only the other day Colonel de la Prade was singing your praises as one of his best officers. He narrated some of your exploits. I will not offend your modesty by repeating them."

Armand was thankful for that. He was also glad that there was not to be a long engagement. Colonel Chartier did not approve of them. As a soldier he believed in decisive action. Long engagements were a great strain on young people, and sometimes led to disaster.

Armand was made known to the family. With Yvonne and Madame Chartier—he was not allowed to be very much alone with Yvonne now that he was engaged—he visited the aunt in Aix, and took the opportunity of calling upon Alphonse at the same time, much touched by the continued devotion of that young man.

The aunt was formidable. She was tall and thin and severe. She cross-examined Armand upon his political principles and hoped he hated M. Herriot as much as she did. Being deaf, she did not hear his murmured defence of that statesman. She was convinced that France was rotten

with Communism, instigated by German agents who, of course, were Jews. She abused the English and Americans for their treachery to France, which did not surprise her in the least. England had always been a nation of shopkeepers and utterly hypocritical. America, of course, was not yet civilized.

She was pleased with the appearance of Yvonne's future husband.

"You have a soldier's face," she said graciously. "All the male members of my family were soldiers. You will find their names in the history of France as far back as du Guesclin. . . . Yvonne, my dear, I congratulate you, and I hope you'll be happy and have plenty of babies. What's that? Only one? That's what is bringing France to ruin. How shall we fight Germany again if there are no babies in France?"

Armand had beads of sweat on his brow after this interview. He felt like Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward VII, in the presence of Queen Victoria, when he was a middle-aged man.

There was another aunt in Tours, and several uncles, and innumerable cousins. They approved of him, he thought, without enthusiasm. Perhaps they did not regard a professor of history in a provincial Lycée as quite good enough for one of their relatives. They were wonderfully unanimous in their distrust of M. Herriot, their hatred of the English and Americans, their great anxiety about the security of France, their absolute belief that Germany was already preparing for another war, their secret and tragic apprehension, which they only half expressed, that French civilization was menaced by overwhelming forces of racial and economic pressure and by the vulgarities of a mechanized world.

Armand Gatières was married to Yvonne Chartier in the Church of Notre Dame des Doms. There was a guard of honour, formed by a company of the Chasseur Alpains, who tossed their trumpets up as the bride and bridegroom passed

between their lines. Armand was in his uniform and wore the Légion d'Honneur, the Croix de Guerre with palms, and the English decoration of the Military Cross. Yvonne, in her white satin gown with a wreath of silver daisies round her coiled hair, was so beautiful that the crowd drew a deep breath when she appeared.

Someone in the crowd outside the church—one of the students of the Lycée—said some words which reached her ears and made her smile.

*"Quelle beauté! Elle est comme une princesse de France dans une vieille chanson!"*

She told those words afterwards to Armand, who was much touched by a tribute which he thought so true and charming.

At the wedding breakfast in the Hôtel Crillon there was a great company, including the relatives of both families—Lucille was there with her English husband—and the most distinguished members of society in Avignon. Colonel de la Prade, now retired, was a fine figure with his white moustache. There were old comrades of the war, among whom was the tragic figure of that blind and mutilated man, Louis Corbin. The noisiest group was formed by the senior students of the Lycée, excited by this marriage of their professor of history, and hilarious after their first glass of champagne.

Alphonse, very noble-looking in his morning suit, proposed the health of the bride, his sister, and did so with admirable eloquence and sweetness, with an affectionate tribute to his new brother-in-law, whom he described as a *preux chevalier, sans peur et sans reproche*. He owed him, he said, a great debt of inspiration and would always regard him as his intellectual leader.

This speech was cheered to the echo by the senior students of the Lycée, though it is doubtful whether they had heard a single word of it, because of their hilarity and a second glass of champagne which had now refreshed them.

Colonel Chartier spoke a few words with gravity and

dignity. He was proud, he said, to welcome into his family a man who wore upon his breast the Croix de Guerre and other orders which proved his service to France. He had been cited three times before the Army for extraordinary valour. He had been through the flaming furnace of Verdun. He had suffered the devilish agony of being a prisoner of the Boches.

He would have said more, perhaps, but for the obstreperous enthusiasm of the students, who punctuated every sentence with loud cheers which interfered with the effect of eloquence.

Armand made a speech in reply. He was obviously in a state of great emotion. He was a little incoherent. But it did not matter very much. His students cheered him just as though he had been a great orator. The wedding guests did not listen very closely to his stammered words. He said something about having been treated well as a prisoner. He said something about his love for France, which was in his heart and blood. He said that his experience of war in those tragic years of history now becoming old had left him with the profound conviction that all men who had that knowledge of horror in their souls should dedicate themselves to peace so that youth—this splendid youth of France, and the youth of other nations—might be saved from such senseless sacrifice. He hoped that the younger generation might establish a comradeship across the frontiers of hate. He was glad to be working among young men upon whom the future destiny of the world, its hope of peace—

Yvonne touched his sleeve during one of those pauses caused by the cheers of his students.

"You are saying the wrong things, my dear!" she whispered. "You are speaking like a pacifist in a Paris *bistro*!"

He smiled down at her.

"I am a pacifist. It's my faith. . . . My friends and comrades—"

They cheered him again. They drank his health again in good champagne and Château-Neuf-du-Pape.

Outside the Hôtel Crillon the Chasseurs Alpains who had formed the guard of honour were marching down the street, playing the song of their regiment to which Armand, this happy man, had gone up the roads of France towards the furnace fires on many days of battle.

Auprès de ma blonde  
Qu'il fait bon, fait bon, fait bon,  
Auprès de ma blonde  
Qu'il fait bon dormir !

## XXXI

They spent their honeymoon in England—first for a few weeks in London, and then with Lucille and her husband in their country home on the edge of Sussex. The weather was unfortunate and fulfilled the worst prejudices of the French mind regarding the English climate. Lucille was in despair when it rained every day for three weeks in the month of July.

"I assure you," she told Yvonne, "this is very unusual. The English summer as a rule is delightful, neither too hot nor too cold. Really, I am ashamed that we haven't arranged things better for you. Arthur, my dear, why don't you do something about it?"

She was becoming very English, very sensitive to any criticism of England.

Yvonne criticized it privately in the bedroom with Armand.

"I should go mad if I had to live in England," she confessed one night. "This rain ! It goes on every day. Listen to it now, in those wet fields. To-day Lucille took me for a walk while you were talking with her husband. We tramped up to the ankles in mud, and then we met a battalion of cows, and I had to pretend that I was not afraid of cows, and especially of English cows, who have a vicious look in their eyes. I kept on saying to myself, '*Courage, petite femme ! Souviens toi de ta tradition. Ton mari porte la Croix de Guerre. Il était un des héros de Verdun.*' "



Armand laughed at this narrative, and embraced her, and kissed her bare arms.

"You are very brave," he assured her. "I also am afraid of cows. As a hero of Verdun, I confess that cows alarm me."

"These English," said Yvonne presently, while she was combing out her hair, "they are extraordinary! They have no manners. At dinner to-night Lucille's husband passed me a piece of bread on the end of his fork across the table, like a *terrassier* with some low-class girl."

"They are informal," said Armand. "It amuses them to be a little gypsy-like sometimes."

"I am not amused by that kind of thing," said Yvonne, unconsciously plagiarizing Queen Victoria.

She was of opinion that English gentlemen were completely unintelligent, or, if they had any gleam of intelligence, were careful to hide it. At dinner she had sat next to a young man who was an Earl or something of the kind. He spoke schoolboy French with an atrocious accent. He asked her if she hunted the fox—"Chassez-vous le renard?" He also asked whether she went much to the Folies Bergères. He was surprised and hurt when she told him that she had never been to the Folies Bergères, and that it was a disgusting place designed entirely for English tourists. On the other side of her was a middle-aged colonel in the English Army, who asked her why France didn't play the game. When she inquired what game, believing that it might be the game of golf—that absurd game of hitting a little ball and walking after it in wet fields—he explained that he meant the friendship between France and England. He had the impertinence to suggest that France had not been sufficiently grateful to England for what they had done in the war, and for letting them off their debts.

"It doesn't encourage us," he said, "to fight for France again."

"And what was your answer to that, my very dear lady?"

asked Armand, kissing her bare shoulder as she sat before an old mirror lit only by two candles.

Yvonne's answer had surprised the English colonel so much that he nearly choked over his food.

"It is for England to be grateful to France," she had told him. "France was the shield which protected England from German invasion. French soldiers died in millions in order to protect the Channel ports while England drilled her young men at home, and then, after the war, made friends with Germany in order to increase her trade."

"You said that?" asked Armand with a look of stupefaction.

Yvonne smiled at him in the mirror.

"We had a little quarrel about it until Lucille became anxious and interrupted us. As a matter of fact, I was quoting my father. He holds that opinion."

"I know," said Armand. "I have heard him say so. But it is not the truth according to history. The English left a million dead in the fields of France. In any case, it is not generous. I wish you hadn't talked like that at an English table, my most lovely and adorable lady."

He was rather distressed for a moment.

"I am French," she answered. "I defend France when it is attacked. *Cet animal est méchant. Quand on l'attaque il se défend!*"

She gave a laughing cry of annoyance.

"How is it possible to do my hair in a dark room by candle-light? I can't see the tip of my nose. This house is a dungeon. It is uncivilized. Oh, to be back in Avignon!"

### XXXII

Armand found marriage suited him remarkably well, especially marriage with Yvonne. There were times when he had a sense of happiness so complete that he was almost alarmed.

He had never believed that human life with its eternal struggle, its cruelties, its unsatisfied yearnings, its stupidities, its unintelligence, could yield such moments of ecstasy, such a sense of peace, such spiritual well-being to a man like himself whose mind had been wounded in the war, and whose memory held many painful recollections. He had underestimated the compensations of this life. He had been too cynical of its promises. Here he was, heaped with happiness.

Yvonne was exquisite. Her beauty was like that of nature, with many moods and with a thousand revelations of some new charm, new effect of loveliness, new subtlety of form. Her hands, he thought, were very lovely, full of character, divinely modelled. She had a wonderful grace of body, and every movement she made, every unconscious attitude, had a most perfect poise and rhythm—at least, to his lover's eye, and to his artist's eye. Alphonse, her brother, said she was not bad-looking. Absurd understatement !

Her mind baffled him a little. She was not to be interpreted easily, like a simple peasant girl—if indeed peasant girls are simple. He was aware of mysteries, subtleties, reservations beyond his understanding, and unknown to her own self-consciousness. They were perhaps hereditary instincts which conflicted with her very modern outlook on life. He noticed a touch of arrogance in her now and then, although she laughed at her prim old aunts and her pompous uncles, so proud of their lineage. It was family pride, to be laughed at by herself but not to be touched by outside criticism. And because of that, perhaps, she had amusing little habits of command, about which her husband chaffed her sometimes. She ordered porters about as though they were her serfs, and because even porters are not immune to the allurements of pretty womanhood, unless very bothered by work and wages, they hurried to obey her orders.

"It is certain, my dear Yvonne," said Armand, "that you are descended from ladies who were waited on by a thousand varlets !"

She looked surprised at this suggestion.

"Surely you don't accuse me of any haughtiness, Armand? I have no conceit of myself."

"Heavens, no!" he answered. "Medieval princesses knew nothing of self-conceit. But squires and pages bowed the knee to them. That taxi-driver took off his hat to you just now as though you had given him a thousand-dollar tip. And you gave him two francs with the gesture of a princess distributing largesse to her peasants. It was superb."

"I think I shall be a little angry with you," she said, making a comical face at him. "You are always jeering at me."

"I am always worshipping you," he told her very truly.

She was a child in some ways—a little wilful now and then, accustomed to be petted, pleased with her own beauty, delighted with pretty frocks, or any little jewel he was glad to buy her. She seemed a child when he held her in his arms, when she was afraid of the sea, when she held his hand tight in the traffic of London, when they played chess together in the train from Avignon to Paris and she checkmated him with a cry of triumph. Yet, in other ways, she was a grown-up woman, and strangely sophisticated, beyond the reach of his own simple mind.

He felt rough and uncultivated when she was in the mood to play the *grande dame* in some elegant evening frock which he was frightened to touch. In London restaurants where they dined together, she swept across the floors with her head held high and the waiters bowing to her, while he limped up behind, feeling like a *petit bourgeois* and a clodhopping provincial. Once there was an awkward little incident in the Carlton restaurant, where one of the waiters suddenly accosted him with a cry of joy.

"*Tiens, mon capitaine ! Vous vous souvenez de Jacques Boileau ? J'étais au régiment, sur la Somme, à Verdun.*"

Armand remembered him well. They had lain together in a shell-hole, with dead bodies.

*"Tiens, mon vieux ! Quelle chance de te revoir !"*

Yvonne had passed on. The manager had bowed low to her. He was astonished to see her husband putting his arm round the shoulder of one of his waiters and kissing him on the cheek. Yvonne was even more surprised. She was just for one moment slightly annoyed.

"My dear Armand," she said, when he rejoined her, "I do not like being left alone in foreign restaurants, with everyone staring at me as though I were a bad woman searching for her prey. Also I really don't think you ought to show such effusive affection for one of the waiters. Those English ladies at the next table think you must be drunk or mad."

"An old comrade of mine," he said. "An excellent fellow."

"My husband," said Yvonne, studying him with a smile in which there was still a trace of vexation, "there are times when you lack dignity and forget the manners of civilized society."

For just a second—for the thirtieth part of a second—he was hurt by this rebuke. But he answered humbly :

"That is true. I am uncivilized. I learnt my manners in trenches and shell-holes. It's a tragedy for you to have such a low-class husband."

There was no more vexation in her smile. She put her hand across the table and held his tightly.

"I love you because you learnt your manners in trenches and shell-holes. I am very proud to be your wife. Have I not told you that before? The words seem familiar ! . . . And now, is there any food in England? Do we drink something?"

He had married a patrician girl, very elegant, very delicate in her ways, very sensitive to any vulgarity. He had married the daughter of an old French family with a tradition of pride, with instincts rooted in the past, with a passionate temperament which had the sun in its blood, and something

of the spirit of primitive times when women dwelt in walled towns and saw their knights ride out to battle across the plain, while they pulled the hair of their pageboys and read anorous poems. At least he told her so, jestingly, teasingly, when they had their first arguments of married life, their lovers' quarrels, and revealed themselves to each other, knowing that, in spite of love, they had been strangers until marriage. She was as passionate as any peasant girl. She was quick to take offence. She was moved easily to tears by a line of verse or by a strain of music. She was romantic in her ideas of life, and yet could be a little hard, and was contemptuous of weakness and impatient of tolerance towards those whom she disliked.

## XXXIII

There was one subject upon which conversation with Yvonne was difficult, and that was unfortunate, because it happened to be the subject in which Armand was most interested. It was his work for international peace.

She mentioned it only an hour or two after their wedding-breakfast, when they were in their *wagon-lit* on the way to Calais and England.

"My dear little husband," she said, drawing back her head for a moment's respite from his kisses, "what was all that nonsense you were talking when you rose to make your speech? I became quite alarmed. I thought you must be a little '*étoilé*'."

"Perfectly true," he admitted. "I was drunk with joy. I'm still drunk with joy. I believe I shall continue in that condition for the rest of life. It's a very pleasant sensation. But to what part of my ridiculous speech are you referring, *ma dame aux riantes yeux verts*?"

"It was something about peace," she said. "Something about making friends with the Germans."

He endeavoured to explain the matter—his work for the *Ligue des Combattants pour la Paix* and for the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*. But it was difficult at that time to give a full explanation of his ideas and labours on international understanding and co-operation. The ticket collector appeared and demanded, "*Les billets, s'il vous plaît !*" The *wagon-lit* official appeared and had something to say. In any case, it was absurd to talk about such things an hour or two after a wedding-breakfast, with an adorable wife who made a journey to Calais seem like the fast train to Paradise.

Besides, she didn't seem to like what he was telling her. She was astonished that he should think of such things. The only good Germans, she said, were dead Germans. She begged him not to tease her by talking like a Communist when she was under the impression that he was a distinguished soldier of France and her very handsome husband.

He kissed her again before cursing the restaurant attendant, after his departure, for impertinent intrusion. The subject of conversation was changed.

But it turned up again. It was a subject which could not be avoided altogether, because it coloured all his ideas about life and was at the very centre of his thoughts. Everything he saw in England—small boys playing in the parks—the Changing of the Guard at St. James's Palace—a cricket match on the village green near his brother-in-law's house—made his mind jump to the problem of preventing another war in Europe. Those village boys in their white flannels—would they fight again on the side of France if another war happened? Would they lie one day in crumpled attitudes of death, torn and mangled by shell-fire, on some ravaged field, as he had seen thousands of young Englishmen on the first day of the Somme battles in July of 1916?

Those English Guardsmen, in their scarlet tunics and great bearskins, marching so magnificently, with such superb swagger, to the King's palace, gave him a queer thrill of emotion which he tried to analyse. It was the thrill he

always had at seeing a French regiment pass—a tingling in the blood, a sense of exaltation, a tightening at the heart.

This rhythm of marching men, these uniforms of fighting men, stirred something primitive, instinctive, in human nature. The very babies felt it—these English babies in perambulators, with their pretty nurses. Yvonne felt it, as he saw by her bright eyes and smiling lips, and the eager poise of her body as she looked over the heads of the crowd. The glamour of a uniform—the blare of brass instruments—the glint of bayonets—what strange power did they have over human psychology?

It was ridiculous, really, for sensible fellows in the twentieth century to be dressed in blood-red coats and those preposterous bearskins, and to walk with stiff knees like automatic men, and to give convulsive jerks at the shout of an officer. It was savage stuff really. Ju-ju stuff! The appeal to totem worship and the war-paint of the braves.

"Certainly they are magnificent," said Yvonne, "though not so splendid, of course, as our Gardes Républicaines."

"They ought to be abolished!" said Armand jestingly. "We shall never get rid of war so long as we allow men to march about in uniform. It is an incitement to tribal instincts, irresistible but unintelligent."

Yvonne slapped his hand, which was tucked through her right arm.

"Armand, you are ridiculous! You say these things to make me angry."

It wasn't to make her angry that he said those things, but to bring her nearer to himself in spiritual understanding and sympathy. It would be a divorce of their minds to some extent, to a painful degree, if she remained hostile to his convictions and endeavours on the subject of peace.

Many times in that first year of marriage he tried to persuade her that a moderate pacifism, an intelligent pacifism, was not a disloyalty to France or the vague illusion of visionary minds. He argued that it was the only method by which



world calamity could be avoided, because of the intensification of mechanized and chemical warfare, and the shrinking of time and distance, and the interdependence of nations, and the horrible menace of aerial bombardment. Europe must disarm down to the necessities of police protection and a common defence, he said, or there would be another explosion like the last. Nations armed to the teeth against each other would be tempted to use their weapons one day on some pretext or quarrel. Other nations would be dragged in. France would have to fight again. The ruin of the last war, not yet repaired, leaving a frightful legacy of death and debt, would be merged into the ruin of the next.

"My dearest child," he said one evening, in the bedroom of his sister's house in Sussex, "let us talk about this quietly for half an hour. I want you to know what I am doing and thinking. I have a deep and humble respect for your intelligence. It will be disastrous if we do not agree, within limits, about my most passionate interest and work. You see I become more and more convinced that the only way of escape for France and Europe is to forget the ancient grudge between France and Germany, and to encourage French and German youth to advance along the same road towards a new system of international law and justice by which differences of opinion would be brought before a high tribunal whose judgments would be acknowledged and obeyed. It sounds very dull, I know, perhaps a little fantastic, but, after all, it was the idea of Briand. It is the plan of Herriot. A great body of intelligence in France is moving towards that solution. I am only an insignificant recruit, *un petit caporal*, in this campaign for peace. Henri de Jouvenel, for instance, is one of the leaders. Henri Barbusse is another. Romain Rolland is a third."

"Traitors all!" cried Yvonne impatiently as she dressed herself for dinner in an English country house.

"No, no," he said. "That is not true, my dear child. You distress me by your intolerance. And I bore you when

I reveal my profound convictions to you. I hate boring you. And yet . . ."

He clasped her bare arms and leaned over her shoulder to kiss her lips as she turned her face towards him, with laughing eyes.

"You are a dreamer, Armand! You shock me by some of the things you say. They are against my family tradition and my private prejudices. You say, for instance, that the Germans are human beings. But, my dear, that is against the experience of history—and you are a professor of history in the Lycée of Avignon. They are inhuman. Their heads are the wrong shape. It is a nation which believes in brutality. . . . Allow me to powder my face."

He allowed her to powder her face, though he thought it unnecessary. He stood behind her, looking at this operation in the mirror.

"There are many good and liberal-minded Germans," he said. "One of them happened to save my life at a critical moment, as I have told you too often. I am grateful to him. If it hadn't been for him I shouldn't be looking at your beauty in this mirror and thanking God for life."

Yvonne smiled at him in the mirror and put a tiny touch of rouge on her lips before answering him.

"Allow me to go on hating the Germans," she said. "It's in my blood, that hatred. All my ancestors were soldiers of France. I believe in the sword of justice."

"Your brother, who had the same ancestors, has joined the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*."

He saw a slight shadow creep into her eyes.

"I am afraid you have perverted him," she answered. "Shall we talk about something else, my husband?"

They talked about something else. In those early months of marriage every sentence almost was punctuated by a kiss, if they were alone, and that is a charming way of closing any subject of conversation leading to unnecessary argument.

## XXXIV

A year later there was a new Frenchman in France. He was called Armand Philippe, and was christened with much ceremony in the Church of Notre Dame des Doms. He looked remarkably like a little monkey with brown hair and eyes, but his father was proud of him and profoundly touched by his appearance in a difficult world ; a world which seemed to have gone mad and bad.

Armand himself, who was a student of world affairs because of his job as professor of history in the Lycée of Avignon, and who had a simple idea that he might do something in a small way to increase the sum of human intelligence at least among some of the younger men in France, was gravely discouraged by the forces of disintegration and despair bearing down upon the human race, the human mind, and the destiny of Armand Philippe, that new Frenchman who lay in a wooden cradle unconscious of the fates and furies whirling about the world in a *danse macabre* which reached as far as Avignon and the fair fields of Provence and the azure coast beyond the Alpes Maritimes, where Yvonne and Armand and little Armand Philippe stayed for a few weeks during the Easter vacation.

The shopkeepers and hotel-keepers of Avignon—even the guides in the Palais des Papes—were beating their breasts, or at least raising their hands in disconsolate gestures, because there were no more foreign tourists, upon whom their livelihood depended. No longer did men with megaphones recite the history of Avignon to coachloads of travellers on their way to Nîmes and Arles and the ruined city of Les Baux. The American invasion had suddenly ceased after a day in October of 1929. Something very curious had happened in the United States which had called them all back again. Something had crashed, and caused strange tremors around the world, especially in places where financial

gentlemen wrote little figures in large ledgers. The eternal tide, as it seemed, of American dollars, fructifying the soil of France and filling the tills of the shopkeepers, had abruptly stopped, to the great alarm of Provençal peasant farmers, growing olives and oranges and lettuces and flowers, and to the distress of modistes, jewellers, florists, scent manufacturers, gigolos, Russian orchestras, ballet dancers, cabaret entertainers, hotel furnishers, restaurant proprietors, cooks, waiters, conjurers, gymnastic instructors, and croupiers along that coast of pleasure from Mentone to Toulon, by way of Nice, which since the war had been the paradise of profiteers and the playground of the leisured crowds.

The Americans had been the first to leave, after that crash in Wall Street which had resounded round the world. They had not come back. God, it seemed, had a grudge against the United States. The richest country in the world, the country of mass-production and mechanized civilization, had lost its magic by the finger-touch of some malign fate. Poverty had overtaken them. Their banks were closing their doors. Factories were turning off men and stopping the machines. Farmers were burning their crops. Something had gone bad in the United States.

"It is a lesson for them," said the French people in Avignon, shrugging their shoulders. "They were too rich. They did not know how to use their wealth. Those tourists—Sacred Name! It is possible to breathe again in Avignon and Paris. It is possible to hear the French language in France. There are always compensations for other people's misfortunes."

The French people who spoke like that were not connected with business. They were not losing money directly by the loss of the tourist traffic.

But this calamity in the United States was affecting other nations. It was a spreading disease. The American people had lent thousands of millions of dollars to Germany and other countries. In their own distress they called back these

loans. But Germany and other countries were unable to pay. Even in England, steady old England, the rock of world finance, something was not quite right. Something, said Mr. André Siegfried in a book which Armand Gatières read in his study on three evenings, when Yvonne was asleep in bed before the arrival of Armand Philippe, something was very wrong with England. It was a country living beyond its means and maintaining a standard of life by the taxation of the rich for the benefit of the poor, because of some traditional pride. The English aristocracy was being bled to death to pay for social services, and the Government was borrowing money to pay for a dole handed out to unemployed men. Their Budget was not balanced. André Siegfried seemed to know. French financiers became uneasy.

Because of the difficulties of French finance, the insecurity of the franc, political anxieties regarding the Cartel des Gauches and political corruption, immense sums of French money had been invested in English banks. French business men trading with England in scents and silks and a thousand luxuries had left their credits across the Channel in short-term deposits. Now even England didn't seem quite safe. Nothing seemed safe. Germany announced its inability to pay either reparations or debts. Under pressure from America and England, France had scaled down her claims for reparations against Germany year by year. The French Government had agreed to the Dawes Plan, to the Young Plan. Now Germany had defaulted. France would get nothing although the United States still demanded the payment of war debts. If England went bad ! . . .

French business men withdrew their credits in gold, week after week. Perhaps, after all, France was the only safe country in Europe. The old French stocking might be the best hiding-place.

Even in Avignon, remote from the centres of financial activity, very provincial in its outlook, there was an indrawing of breath, a look of bewilderment, an exchange of glances

in which fear lurked, when on a September day the news came that England had gone off the gold standard. Was it possible that England could not pay in gold? Could it be true that the Bank of England had empty tills? Wasn't there an English proverb, "As safe as the Bank of England"?

The English disappeared from Avignon. On his morning walks to the Lycée Armand no longer saw those English women with short skirts and heavy boots, who stared up at ancient buildings with guide-books under their arms; and those tall, athletic-looking girls, slim and boyish and frank-eyed—they smiled at him sometimes—who packed themselves into small cars and drove away towards the Côte d'Azur. The caterers of pleasure and catables and picture post-cards raised their hands to heaven, or at least in that direction, and cried out in terror.

*"Mais, voyez donc, si les Anglais disparaissent? Mais c'est incroyable, cette crise! Nous sommes ruinés. Nous sommes foutus!"*

On the Côte d'Azur, to which Yvonne went with Armand six months after her babe was born—they drove there in his second-hand Citroën—there were no Americans, no English, no Argentines, no Chileans, no rich or leisured folk. It was very pleasant and peaceful, but it was the peace of a desert. The Paradise of the pleasure-seekers was Paradise Lost. It was Paradise for Sale. On every villa were the words "*A Vendre*". Yvonne found it dull. The modistes' shops from Paris had closed down. The croupiers were asleep in the rooms at Cannes. The hotel proprietor wept one night when Armand talked to him.

"I am getting very deeply into debt," he said. "I have lost my English and American clients. What can you expect, with the exchange so heavily against the English, and with nine, ten, eleven million unemployed in the United States? What is going to happen to France? We are not a desert island. We live on exports and imports. And our taxation becomes intolerable. There is talk of increased

taxation. Germany does not pay her reparations. How then did we win the war? The world has certainly gone mad, *mon capitaine*."

"I agree," said Armand. "There is no intelligence. Or the intelligence which exists does not control the situation. It is annoying."

It was bewildering. In his study at Avignon, late at night, when Yvonne was in bed, Armand tried to find some clue to the mysteries through which humanity was groping darkly. At a time when civilization had unparalleled resources of wealth, due to machine power and modern science, there was a creeping paralysis of trade and industry, a breakdown in the means of exchange, and vast armies of unemployed men, getting bitter, angry, and demoralized, for lack of work and wages. In *L'Eclaireur de Nice* there was a paragraph one morning saying that in Winnipeg the harvest of wheat was selling for less than the price of sawdust, yet in many countries—in Germany, according to the letters of Otto von Menzel—millions of men and women were underfed. Prices of raw material—grain, cotton, oil, rubber, coal and iron—had fallen so low that their producers could not afford the wages of their workpeople. In Australia and the Argentine ranchers were slaughtering their cattle because they could get no price for them. It was all enormously bewildering.

Armand Gatières, who was no economist, believed that the war was the direct cause of most of this misery. It had dislocated the mechanism of the international machine—so delicately poised in the industrial era. It had broken the rhythm of life. And all the war debts had put burdens on the human drudge beyond his strength. It had left a legacy of fear in every nation of Europe, lest the new frontiers, drawn by the Peace Treaties, should be challenged by new combinations of enemies, or by the old enemy. They were all spending vastly beyond their means to support armies and armaments. They were ruining themselves with the

idea that they were saving themselves. France even—*la France Victorieuse*—was not assured of safety, though they had the greatest and most efficient army, though Germany was still disarmed. France was fortifying her frontiers at enormous expense, yet never with a sense of security. One day German air-fleets might cross those fortifications and destroy Paris from the air.

The French people would never be sure of peace, because they were sure that one day, sooner or later, Germany would demand the revision of the Peace Treaties and force another war on France. Certain leaders of French thought, like Aristide Briand and Léon Blum and Henri de Jouvenel—and Armand Gatières in his small sphere of influence—believed, indeed, that there was a safer way for France than by preparing for another war. They believed that an international code of justice might be found, to which all countries in Europe, and presently in the world, would give allegiance. They hoped that by easing the pressure on Germany, and offering friendship instead of enmity, there might be an end to the hereditary feud, and some progressive method of disarmament to lift the intolerable burden of taxation from the bowed shoulders of underpaid labour. But these men, these dreamers, these idealists, were regarded as defeatists and fools by the majority of their fellow-citizens.

The world was slipping towards ruin. It was drifting towards war. Europe, fifteen years after a world war, was one great powder magazine, which any spark of racial passion might explode. The misery of unemployed men, the creeping up of Communism, the beast-like instinct of self-preservation, this increasing poverty of nations fortifying themselves vainly against their neighbours' trade and industry, might lead to a spreading anarchy in which the tribes would fight once more for the elemental needs of life, or for racial mastery.

It was a queer world in which to arrive. Armand crept sometimes into the nursery of his new-born babe and stood



beside his cradle, bending over that little monkey-like creature who was his son. Once, when little Armand Philippe was awake, his brown eyes gazed with a curious look of wonder and intelligence into his father's eyes. His tiny paw caught hold of his father's finger and gripped it tight.

Armand apologized to him.

*"Ce n'est pas ma faute,"* he said, *"ce monde qui est fou !"*

He very much wanted to make the world safer for Armand Philippe.

### XXXV

Life at the Lycée went on with a steady, peaceful rhythm. New students came. Old students passed on, and Armand still received the hero-worship of his class, in which he saw different faces and made fresh friends. He was always sympathetic to youth, always comradely, never stern in his ways of discipline.

It was unfortunate that, for some reason, he was not much liked by the Director and some of the other professors. They disapproved of his methods of teaching, and perhaps were a little jealous of his private friendships with the boys. He was aware of intrigues against his position. The professor of mathematics—Barbier—was an open enemy, and hardly nodded sometimes in response to Armand's courteous "Good morning" when they met. He and another master—Albert Picard, lecturer on French literature—seemed to be excessively annoyed by his associations with the peace movement. They went out of their way to argue on the subject with extreme violence, which Armand countered by good-natured badinage. They never missed a chance of sneering at the Society of Nations, and its failure—which Armand was the first to acknowledge—to arrive at any measure of disarmament based upon a general pact of security. His plea for patience was ridiculed. His suggestion that France consistently blocked the way to disarmament aroused their anger. His

arguments that disarmament first would lead to security by a general release from fear and a relief from intolerable taxation seemed to them a betrayal of French interests and a policy of suicide. His simple belief in the Locarno Pact as a guarantee of the French frontier against German aggression was greeted by the sneers of M. Barbier and the harsh laughter of M. Picard.

"Do you honestly believe, Gatières, that the English would fight on our side again if Germany attacked us?"

That was Barbier's question.

Armand was thoughtful. He was thinking back to conversations he had had with his English brother-in-law and with Lucille.

"They don't want to get involved in another European war," he answered. "They want to link up with their own Empire and withdraw as much as possible from the feuds and hatreds of the Continent. They don't approve of our policy of eternal hatred against Germany. But I honestly believe that if we were attacked again wantonly, England would stand by our side as she did before. They are a generous-hearted people."

Albert Picard snorted.

"You are a sentimentalist, Gatières. Your sister married an Englishman, I understand. Forgive me if I say that your knowledge of history ought to have made you acquainted with the essential treachery of the English mind. They would betray anyone and everyone for their own interests. They have always done so. They will always do so. *Perfide Albion!*"

"They did not betray us in the war," said Armand quietly. "I fought by their side sometimes—on the Somme. Those young English soldiers were heroic."

"Why drag in your military experiences?" asked Barbier, who had not been near the fighting-line in that time of trouble, but had been a very fierce hater behind the lines, teaching arithmetic to small boys.

Picard, the professor of French literature, a sallow-faced man, not careful of his personal appearance, and somewhat neglectful of clean linen, made a more personal attack on the professor of history.

"You will get into trouble one day, *mon vieux*," he said, one evening after class.

"In what way?" asked Armand, lifting an amused eyebrow.

"Some of the parents are already getting alarmed about your peace propaganda. I was talking only yesterday with Madame Deshoulières. She tells me that her son Paul had a quarrel with his father about Henri de Jouvenel's book on peace, and quoted you as approving of it."

"I do," said Armand.

Albert Picard shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well! But I warn you that General Deshoulières is a man of considerable importance, and one of the governors of the Lycée. He does not approve of Henri Jouvenel or of his book. He says that you are undermining the morality of this Lycée. I pass the word along as friendly information."

Armand laughed good-naturedly.

"My dear Picard, I don't think you ought to report the private conversations of your distinguished friends, even if they happen to be the parents of my students. In any case, I don't pay the slightest attention to the remarks of General Deshoulières, whom I regard as an incompetent judge of French literature, although a very gallant cavalry officer."

Picard retorted harshly.

"I agree with him, nevertheless, that you are undermining the morality of this Lycée."

For a moment Armand stiffened, and there was a glint of fire in his eyes. He had his D'Artagnan look.

"That is an accusation which I do not tolerate from you, Picard. Kindly withdraw it instantly."

Picard did not like that glint in his eyes, nor that D'Artagnan look. Armand Gatières was a pacifist, but he had been

a captain of Chasseurs. He might forget his pacifism for a moment—they were very illogical, those pacifists—with unpleasant results. The professor of literature made a grudging apology to the professor of history, but marked it up against him.

Armand was not troubled by this hostility of professors. He did not pay any attention to Barbier's sneers or Picard's warnings. He was much more worried by the difference of opinion between himself and Yvonne on the same subject.

He tried now to avoid it as much as possible, but after all it was very important in his scheme of life. He was becoming more rather than less engaged in his work for peace.

Because of his war record, perhaps, his presence was welcomed at peace meetings in Paris to which he went now and again at urgent invitation. On each occasion Yvonne was rather difficult. She did not like him leaving her for a night or two, but refused to go with him. She disliked his association with men whom she considered to be dangerous and on the wrong side of politics—men like Henri Barbusse, and Romain Rolland, whose work she detested. He explained to her that these meetings cut across all the political parties. There were many ex-officers among them. Indeed, most of the members were *anciens combattants de guerre*. Their purpose was not revolutionary in any political sense. They were working to prevent the suicide of European civilization, he told her. They disliked the idea of seeing Paris destroyed by bombs, not because they were in a blue funk—some of them wore every decoration possible for valour—but because they believed in intelligence and European unity. They did not love the Germans, but they believed that continuance of active hatred and hostility would lead inevitably to a new war later on. They were ready to discuss a revision of the Peace Treaties—some alteration of the Polish Corridor, for example—not because they wanted to bribe the Germans to stay quiet, but because there was justice in the German

point of view and a perpetuation of injustice would not strengthen the moral force of France.

So he told her, persuasively, eager to win her to his side, but always she listened with a smile of incredulity or with signs of impatience.

"The Germans are the Germans," she said, several times. "If we disarm they will cut our throats at the earliest opportunity. If we show weakness they will jump at us like wild beasts. . . . No, Armand, I don't *want* to be fair to them. One can't be fair to people who are uncivilized and brutal. I wish you wouldn't go on with this peace stuff. It's so ridiculous, really! It's so cowardly. I thought I had married a hero. Can't you give up that meeting in Paris and come to tea with me at Aunt Suzanne's?"

He went to Paris, though he hated to leave her even for a night.

She was distressed because he sat up so late writing articles, correcting proofs, translating correspondence from Germans, while she lay awake sometimes yearning for him, and angry with him, so that when he came to bed at last she was fretful.

"Armand, can't you stop that annoying work of yours? I hate to think of you corresponding with Germans. It will hurt your career. People are already beginning to talk. Only the other day Madame Valérie was saying that the students were becoming infected with pacifist ideas. Some of our friends are dropping away. In any case you work too hard. You will kill yourself."

He bent down and kissed her, and slipped his arm beneath her body.

"It's my hobby," he told her. "I try to keep it from you as much as possible. Besides, it's work for little Armand Philippe. I am trying to arrange a better kind of world for him."

She laughed with vexation.

"It's absurd! You are a ridiculous man. If little

Armand Philippe has to defend France in another war one day I hope he'll be as brave as you were."

"My dear child, don't you understand? If we have another war there will be no more France. Perhaps no more Europe. The scientists have invented worse machines than those of the last war. It will be the super-mechanism of slaughter. There will be new varieties of poison gas. Your beauty will be spoilt. Your lovely body will be torn to pieces by bits of steel. That is war."

"I shall still keep my soul," said Yvonne.

"But little Armand Philippe may be choked to death and his bright eyes blinded before they look at life!"

"I'm not worrying about little Armand Philippe," said Yvonne. "He will have to take his chance like his forefathers. Come to bed for goodness' sake!"

### XXXVI

It was some time later when these two, so truly devoted to each other, lovers still, had their first serious quarrel, or perhaps it would be better to say the first serious conflict between irreconcilable ideas, which left them both hurt and wounded.

It was on an afternoon when the Lycée was closed for a national holiday—the fourteenth of July. Armand and Yvonne and Madame Gatières were sitting in their small salon with its panelled walls, in the old house of the rue du Château. Little Armand Philippe, now old enough for adventure, was exploring the mysteries beneath the sofa. There was a ring at the front-door bell, and presently Madeleine, the maid, came in with a visiting-card.

"A foreign gentleman," she said. "He doesn't speak French very well."

Armand glanced at the card and gave an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

"Who is it, Armand?" asked Yvonne, who was knitting a little jacket for her small boy.

"An old friend," he said. "One of my correspondents. Do you remember? He kept back a man who wanted to stick me with his bayonet. His name is Gustav Hoffmann, and he edits a paper in Düsseldorf."

Yvonne let her knitting drop into her lap.

"What has he come for?" she asked in a cold voice.

Armand did not answer that question directly. He spoke to the maid.

"Ask the gentleman to come in, Madeleine."

He was astonished when Yvonne rose suddenly and held him by the arm.

"No, Armand, please! If you must see him, take him into your study. I can't be polite to a German. I can't forget the war. Two of my brothers were killed. How can I shake hands with a German?"

"But, my dear, this German happened to save my life."

"He is a German," answered Yvonne. "His people are preparing to attack us again."

She was strangely pale. There was a look in her eyes which Armand had never seen before, a kind of hardness. He put his arms round her and smiled over at his mother, who was watching this little scene.

"*Maman*, talk to this beautiful lady. Ask her to be kind."

Madame Gatières looked grave.

"I don't want to interfere, Armand," she said gently, "but I quite understand Yvonne's dislike of meeting a German. I remember our dear Bertrand."

Armand looked worried. His visitor was waiting out in the hall. Madeleine was waiting for an answer.

"I owe this man a great debt," he said. "All the happiness I have. I only ask you both to be courteous to him. Is that too much, Yvonne?"

"It is too much," she answered. "I beg of you, Armand, not to bring him in here. I dislike being rude to anyone."

"*Ciel !*" said Armand, in a low voice. He was just a little angry.

He went out into the hall and greeted Gustav Hoffmann warmly, and took him into his study.

"What brings you to Avignon?" he asked, taking Hoffmann's hat and umbrella, and asking him to take a chair.

Gustav Hoffmann sat heavily in the chair. He had grown stouter since the year of the occupation of the Ruhr. He was more distinctively Jewish in appearance than Armand had remembered him. His eyes were still mild and benevolent behind a pair of horn-rimmed glasses.

"I had to see some friends in Nice," he explained. "One of them is a rich man who finances my paper, *Der Friede*. It seemed to me unfriendly to come to Nice without calling upon you in Avignon, especially as I was motoring up to Paris. I hope I have not called at an awkward time, my dear captain?"

"Not in the very least," answered Armand, still hot and worried by his wife's refusal to see this man.

Gustav Hoffmann glanced round Armand's study with smiling eyes.

"So it is here that you write so many excellent articles! They have had a considerable effect upon German readers. Many of them tell me how much they admire your broad-mindedness and idealism. They regard you as one of the champions of peace in Europe."

"I write them without egotism," said Armand. "I am thinking only of the younger generation. Tell me, Hoffmann, are we making any headway? Is German youth getting ready to co-operate with the best intelligence of Europe in establishing an international code of justice—with friendship across the frontiers?"

Gustav Hoffmann stared at the polished boards of Armand's study and sighed heavily. It was a few seconds before he answered this question.

"It is difficult to know Germany," he answered at last.



"We are divided against ourselves. We are arming against each other. We have four armies now in my unhappy country. There is the Stahlhelm, who uphold the old monarchist traditions. There is the Reichsbanner, defending the Republic. There are the Communists. There are the Nazis—the followers of that madman Adolf Hitler, who is gaining many new recruits, especially among the younger men. Sometimes I am alarmed. Indeed, I may say I am always alarmed. It is impossible to prophesy what is going to happen."

"But youth?" asked Armand. "The younger crowd? The members of the Youth Movement with its idealism and its anti-militarism. Which way are they going?"

Gustav Hoffmann laughed uneasily.

"Those are difficult questions! Those who joined the Youth Movement after the war—millions of them—are now ten years older. They are almost middle-aged, and with middle-age comes cynicism and disillusion, and a tendency to laugh at their own ideals of boyhood. Besides, German youth now is in a tragic state. There is only poverty and unemployment. They take their degrees and there is no place for them with a living wage. They receive a technical education, but their skill is unwanted. They see their country helpless, disarmed and humiliated in a hostile world. They remember how they went hungry in their early boyhood during the time of inflation. Some of them are still hungry. They remember nothing but misery and unhappiness after the war. Germany has suffered! They are looking for new leaders who will give them hope as well as work and who will lift Germany out of its present degradation. Some of them see Hitler—that madman!—as the leader of promise. Others are turning away from all ideals, mad or otherwise, to the old belief in force as the only way of escape. Others again believe in the gospel of Lenin as the hope of a world in which capital has broken down and vast masses of men and women are hungry because of over-production, and without comforts because of a glut in luxuries. So you see,

my dear Captain Gatières, our work for peace and intelligence is rather difficult !”

Armand agreed. He had never underestimated the difficulties. He knew only too well the resistance in French public opinion to any concessions which might lift the inferiority complex from the German mind and might undo some of the real injustice which had been inflicted upon Germany by the unwisdom of the Peace Treaties.

“Nevertheless, we must go on with our work, Hoffmann. I still have faith in human intelligence. It must win through in the end. I still have faith in boyhood—the boyhood of the world—if only it gets a spiritual and an intelligent and inspiring leadership. Youth is generous, after all ! Youth is ready to take a risk. Youth is wistful for some guide out of this jungle-darkness in which we are all groping. I see that with my own students. They are eager to accept my own feeble guidance. I have to check myself, lest my influence should go too far—beyond the tolerance of their parents and public opinion.”

Gustav Hoffmann nodded and smiled behind his horn-rimmed glasses.

“Youth,” he said, “is on the side of the angels, if there is an angel of light to lead them. But it is equally prone to devil-worship—or at least to fetish worship, if there are devilish leaders masquerading as national heroes, as miracle workers, or as prophets of good times. Hitler, for instance, is a spell-binder who arrests their imagination. He promises them a revival of national glory with work and wages for all. He denounces the Peace Treaty, Monsieur Poincaré, who is, they believe, the embodiment of evil, Communism, which menaces the destruction of private property, and Jews, upon whom Hitler lays the blame for Germany’s defeat in the war and many of its agonies afterwards. As a Jew I dislike Herr Hitler. As a Jew I am afraid of him.”

This German Jew laughed uneasily again. There was a look of anxiety behind those horn-rimmed spectacles.

"What is he after, this Hitler?" asked Armand. "What does he mean? Otto von Menzel has sent me the *Völkische Beobachter* from time to time. It seems to me a farrago of nonsense. It might have been written in a lunatic asylum."

"It was," said Hoffmann gravely. "Germany is a lunatic asylum. We are all a little mad, or very much mad, because of our sufferings and national downfall. Hitler, for example, believes that he is destined to be the Emperor of the West. He believes that he will be elected to rule over all the Germanic peoples, among whom he includes the Scandinavians and the Baltic folk, with a strange ignorance of ethnology. He believes that Germany should be purified in its race by the exclusion of all Jews and other aliens from its rights of citizenship. Only Aryans must be permitted to marry and to breed. He mixes up Socialistic theories with racial mysticism. The Banks and all national finance will be controlled by the socialistic state. All classes will be forced to labour. Germany will forsake international trade as far as possible and become self-sufficing. The machine will be severely controlled and people will live more simply on the land, and the old gods of the German people will be raised on their altars and Adolf Hitler, an Austrian, a builder's labourer, golden-tongued Adolf, will be the high priest and prophet, and the leader—*der Führer*—of the Aryan and Germanic people, marching on to a high destiny over the bodies of Jews and Frenchmen and Latins and mongrels!"

"Certainly it is madness!" agreed Armand, startled by this exposition of the new party in Germany, which seemed to be making headway at each election although still in a minority of seats in the Reichstag.

He was silent for a moment, and then added a few words.

"I can't believe that Germany will go mad like that. It's unthinkable!"

Hoffmann agreed, and was more hopeful in his next remarks.

"It is, as you say, unthinkable, and personally I am sure

that the National Socialists—the *Nazis* as we call them—will never attain political power. After all, as you say, intelligence must prevail in the end, after the mental maladies of this world crisis. That is what makes me spend time and money on my paper *Der Friede*. I am glad to say it has an increasing circulation all over Germany. I get the most touching letters from young men and former soldiers of the war.”

“Splendid !” said Armand. He was becoming uneasy, not about affairs in Germany but about affairs in his own house. Hoffmann was obviously prepared to stay for some time. It was already getting near dinner-time. By every law of hospitality it was necessary to ask him to dinner—this man who had saved his life, who was devoting himself to world peace. But what would happen if Yvonne refused to sit at table with him, or refused to have dinner served to him ?

Hoffmann talked about the League of Nations and the loss to the world by the deaths of Stresemann and Briand. He talked about the Locarno Pact and the Kellogg Pact, which he thought might be made more helpful than French criticism suggested. He talked about the isolation policy of the United States, and argued that if that great nation would interpret the Kellogg Pact for the abolition of war by the clear and logical conclusion that neutrality would no longer be observed in respect of any aggressor nation, it would have a force behind it of very great importance. It would relieve England of anxiety regarding the Freedom of the Seas and any naval conflict with the United States if a blockade had to be enforced against a nation at war. It would enable France to gain a sense of security in the event of disarmament. It would relieve Germany of the fear—however unreasonable—that France and Poland might declare a “preventive war” in order to uphold her financial claims or prevent a revision of the Treaties.

All this took time. It was seven o'clock by Armand's

wrist-watch. It was dinner-time. But he dared not ask Hoffmann to dinner without the consent of Yvonne. He felt a slight perspiration break out on his forehead. He felt his old wound hurt him as it always did when his nerves were on edge.

At ten minutes past seven he made a pretext to leave the room to look for a paper which he wished to show Hoffmann. He went down to the salon and found his wife and mother there waiting for him.

"My dear one," he said to Yvonne, "I must ask M. Hoffmann to dinner. Can you bear it? Will you be kind and generous?"

"Is it necessary?" she asked very coldly.

He looked into her eyes pleadingly.

"It is necessary. It is required of French courtesy. You will agree, I am certain, however distasteful to you."

Yvonne was silent for a moment.

His mother went over to her and put a hand on her arm.

"I think you must say yes, my dear. Armand is right. We are French. We have a tradition of courtesy. It is a very old tradition of ours."

"*Très bien!*" said Yvonne. "*Comme tu veux.*"

Armand went over to her and tried to kiss her on the cheek, but she turned her face away.

"A thousand thanks, my dear!" said Armand.

She behaved very correctly when he brought Hoffmann into the salon and introduced him. She even forced herself to say a few formal words of thanks to this German for having been of service to her husband during the war. That was very noble of her. Armand was touched by that gallant effort of will power. She was true to the tradition of French courtesy even with an enemy. But during dinner she was silent except for the words required from a hostess. She was extraordinarily pale. To Armand's anxious eyes, which glanced at her now and then, she looked quite ill.

Gustav Hoffmann was aware of this coldness. He ignored

it for a time, and talked a good deal about German youth and its passion for sport. He became enthusiastic about the beauties of Avignon and its historical interest. He was extremely deferential to Madame Gatières, who forced herself to answer graciously. But he became uneasy by the silence of the beautiful girl who was his friend's wife. He looked at her now and then very nervously through his horn-rimmed glasses, while Armand endeavoured to keep the conversation going and to appear perfectly at ease. It was a most painful dinner.

It was not long after dinner when Hoffmann pleaded the fatigue of a long journey and took his leave. He held the ice-cold hand of his hostess and bowed over it profoundly, expressing his thanks for her charming hospitality. He said something of the same kind to Madame Gatières, who murmured polite words.

In the hall, where Armand said good-bye to him, he was for a moment emotional, and put his arm round his friend's shoulder and spoke in German.

"The way of peace is a hard road, my friend ! But it goes uphill towards the stars. Many of us will fall by the wayside before we reach the heights when humanity will be true to its own intelligence. It has been a great joy to see you. I thank you from my heart."

Armand answered him in French. He did not want Yvonne to hear him talking German. It might make her look more ill. She looked unhappy when he returned to the salon. His mother had already retired to her room, perhaps for the purpose of leaving him alone with his wife.

Armand went over to her and took her hands.

"My poor dear," he said, "it was a great ordeal for you. It has made you feel unwell. Your hands are cold."

"I did my best," she answered. "You must admit that I violated my own instincts for your sake."

He kissed her cold hands.

"I do admit it ! It was splendid of you to thank him

for being of service to me in the war. That was quite heroic."

He tried to make her smile, and talked chaffingly, tenderly, treating the affair lightly as a joke.

"I must admit he is not as handsome as Adonis, my German Jew," he said. "But I assure you he is an excellent fellow with a heart of gold. Did you notice his admiration for you? He was spellbound by your beauty."

She was not to be lured into laughter.

"It was hateful," she said. "He is repulsive. And I am afraid, Armand. I am afraid for your sake."

He was astonished and laughed incredulously.

"Afraid? But why—in heaven's name?"

She explained her fear.

"I am certain that he has come with the idea of dragging you deeper into this international pacifism."

Armand laughed again—a little impatiently.

"I am deep in it already—up to the eyebrows. It is my intellectual passion. You know that."

She put her arms about him in a pleading way.

"Armand! I implore you! You will wreck your career. You will come under suspicion. You are too much in touch with these German societies. They are working only for the downfall of France."

He pooh-poohed her words. He treated her like a foolish child.

"That is nonsense, Yvonne! They are the ideas of *L'Action Française* and reactionary minds who do not understand that peace with Germany is essential to France, and that peace cannot be maintained for ever by treading on the necks of a great nation."

Yvonne unclasped her arms and walked away from him.

"Then I have a reactionary mind," she said angrily. "Then my father has a reactionary mind. All my family. And my best friends. Doubtless they are all very stupid in your opinion!"

"No, no !" said Armand. "I am not attacking your distinguished family, my dear. Nor your gallant father, for whose character I have a high respect."

"But not for his intelligence."

Armand smiled.

"It is a traditional intelligence, limited by his education and training and date of birth. He cannot envisage the possibility of peace with Germany, or a new philosophy in the mind of youth."

Yvonne laughed with an angry note in her voice.

"There can never be peace with Germany," she said harshly, "unless France maintains a strong army. Your ideas about disarmament are absurd, Armand. How can we ever disarm with those people waiting to attack us again? Do you want little Armand Philippe to be killed by a German bomb or suffocated by their filthy gas?"

Armand was astounded by her passionate speech, by this sudden anger flaming in her eyes. He tried to soothe her down. He was even a little stern with her, for the first time.

"My dear child, you are hysterical ! You are not normal this evening. What you say is not intelligent. Haven't I told you a hundred times that the work I am doing is to save our little Armand Philippe from having his small body smashed by high explosives—all the little Armand Philippes of France and Germany. And of England and Italy and Europe? Don't you understand yet that it is because I am devoted to youth and young life, and our dear France—its beauty, its civilized ideas, its womanhood—that I have taken up this cross of peace?"

She did not understand. She believed that he was utterly wrong. When he tried to put his arms round her she tore herself away, weeping. She said something very terrible in her passionate emotion.

"You are not worthy of your Croix de Guerre. It is treachery to France."



They were words which cut into his heart like a knife, and left an open wound.

It was their first real quarrel.

## XXXVII

There were months when no allusion was made by either of them to this subject of dispute ; when there seemed no cloud about their happiness with a small boy ; when indeed their love dominated their home life.

But the cloud was always there as a little menace, a little darkness, in the back of the mind. It was unfortunate that there should be any subject which they had to avoid in conversation, and any work which Armand had to conceal as far as possible. He felt guilty when he pushed papers under his blotting-pad if he happened to be working on them when Yvonne came into his study. He knew that nearly always she had observed this attempt at secrecy, and that when he whistled a tune—nearly always the tune of the Chasseurs Alpins, which was "*Auprès de ma blonde*"—she knew that he was hiding his peace propaganda. He felt guilty again when he had been talking to her brother Alphonse, in his third year at Aix-en-Provence, and suddenly became silent, or switched rapidly to a different topic, if she opened the study door and asked if she might intrude upon their *tête-à-tête*.

"I am sorry to interrupt two intellectuals, but I happen to be a little bored with myself. Can you bear my company?"

He was aware of the irony in her voice. He knew that she knew what had been the subject of their conversation, and by a damnable coincidence it always happened that although they talked about everything under heaven—art, books, the professors at Aix, the effect of climate on character, the history of Provence, or what not—it was always when they were discussing the international situation and the chances of disarmament and peace that Yvonne appeared, suspicious of their sudden silence, a little annoyed.

That young man Alphonse Chartier was still devoted to Armand, and Armand had a brotherly and comradely love for him. He had developed a fine grave character, very thoughtful, with more than a touch of nobility, recognized by his fellow students at Aix-en-Provence, or at least by a group of them who acknowledged him as their leader.

They had organized a strong branch of the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*, and were in correspondence with students in German universities. Alphonse Chartier was president of this branch. His gift of oratory was unusual. In Armand's mind he was destined for a political career which would make him famous in France. More than ever this young brother-in-law reminded him of the young Barbaroux, beautiful in youthful manhood, with enthusiasm for liberty, with a quick eloquence which came welling from a generous heart; that most romantic of the Girondins, of whom Madame Roland wrote that "painters would not disdain to copy his features for a head of Antinous, active, frank, and brave, with the vivacity of a young Marseillais". Truly, she said, there was a flash of sunshine when he appeared upon the scene, the sunshine of youth and strength and fresh enthusiasm.

He and Armand were excited by Heriot's scheme for the rescue of European civilization and the preservation of peace, following the German withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference at Geneva until her claim to equality of status had been recognized. Armand had left Yvonne for two nights in order to hear the debate in the French Chamber on October 29th of 1932. It was an historic debate, revealing the anxieties, the emotions, the intellectual traditions of a great nation, conscious of being face to face with grim realities and the necessity for making decisions upon which the lives of its young men and its future destiny would utterly depend. Armand had sat there in the public gallery, profoundly stirred by this scene in which so many of his own ideas and hopes and fears were being discussed.

At the Tribune was Herriot, stout, heavy, and pale, aware of his tremendous responsibility, weighing every word he uttered, no longer the bluff and genial Mayor of Lyons, appealing to mob emotion, but a statesman of France, placing before the assembly proposals of a revolutionary and far-reaching character. To the Right of him were the men of the old tradition, believing only in the power of the sword, in the supremacy of French arms, in the worthlessness of conciliation with their hereditary enemy. On the Left were the men who believed that only by conciliation, and the unity of democratic peoples, would peace be achieved.

The spokesman of the Right was M. Franklin Bouillon, bluff and blustering, sceptical of any pledges which might be made by Germany, even of those which had been made by England; convinced that any form of disarmament would be a treachery to France and a surrender to an enemy already forming new combinations for attack. The spokesman of the Left was M. Léon Blum, leader of the French Socialists, an intellectual and a man of culture, tall, thin, austere, with the passionate belief that security could only be obtained by way of disarmament, yet admitting that the liberal and pacifist forces in Germany were weakened by national passions, encouraged in the past by the mistakes of France.

M. Herriot, that fat, pale man, spoke with a grave eloquence which kept the Chamber silent. His plan was startling. It was enormously bold in conception. It was imaginative, generous in idealism, a noble vision. He took his stand on the pledges of peace. He believed in England's word at Locarno. He believed the American people would regard the Kellogg Pact as a sacred pledge, and would deny neutrality to any nation openly defying it. Fortified by this faith in the collective responsibility of nations to uphold international justice, he outlined his plan for a general reduction of arms.

The French Chamber held its breath as he went from clause to clause of his proposals. In the public gallery there

were murmurs of approval and disapproval, but more of astonishment, quickly hushed. Armand Gatières, ex-officer of Chasseurs Alps, listened with a quickened pulse.

Professional armies, like the German Reichswehr, must be abolished and give way to short-term military service without heavy mobile weapons, such as big guns and tanks. Aerial bombardment must be forbidden by any state. Fleets must be reduced proportionately. The Powers interested in the Mediterranean must agree to a pact of mutual assistance. National armaments must be limited to defence and not equipped for attack, and there would be an international supervision of these conditions. But in addition to these defensive measures, each nation would be called upon to equip a mobile striking force which would be placed at the disposal of the League of Nations for use against any aggressor. The League army, fleet, and air service would be the only aggressive force in the world—the police force of international law, upholding a new order and a new unity in the world.

Armand had come back from Paris impressed by this plan, but aware of its difficulties. If adopted by all the nations it would outlaw war for ever. But that "if" was enormous. Already press opinions were discouraging and critical. The English press, it seemed, was very cold to M. Herriot's plan. The American press raised a thousand objections. In Avignon, typical, perhaps, of French provincial thought of the more intellectual kind, there was no enthusiasm for this method of disarmament.

On the night of his return Armand went with Yvonne to her father's house. Over the dinner-table there had been a heated argument, in which Armand found himself in a minority of one. It was painful to him that Yvonne sided against him.

"Herriot," said Colonel Chartier, "is either a knave or a fool. He ought to be impeached for high treason. He proposes to disarm France and hand over her weapons to an

assembly which has always been hostile to French interests. That is to say, he betrays us."

Very unwisely, Armand argued with his father-in-law. He maintained that the security of France would be stronger if based upon the collective responsibility of nations than upon a competition in armaments which would lead inevitably to another war.

"An illusion!" said Colonel Chartier. "There is no collective responsibility of nations. There never will be. Do you honestly believe, Armand, that war will ever cease between the human tribes, or that disarmament will prevent such warfare?"

"Why not?" asked Armand. "Man is not entirely devoid of intelligence. He is capable of being civilized. The world shrinks, and we are more dependent upon one another. For our own interests it is necessary to have an international code of law."

Colonel Chartier's hand trembled slightly as he poured himself another glass of wine.

"I do not wish to lose my temper," he said irritably. "That is a weakness. But I am bound to say that I disagree violently with your ideas. They are wrong. They ignore natural instincts. If men are deprived of guns, they will fight with knives. If you take away their knives, they will fight with clubs. And disarmament for France will mean superiority for Germany, because of her superior population."

"*Très bien! Très bien!*" cried Yvonne, with a little smile at her husband, an ironical and triumphant smile, which he answered good-humouredly by raising his glass to her and touching it with his lips. She looked so beautiful at her father's table, in this house which reeked with her family tradition—those portraits on the walls, this old furniture, that father with his fine, clear-cut face like one of his own ancestors. He smiled back at her, yet not without a pang that she could ridicule his ideas again.

"But this plan of Herriot's, he says, would give force to

law. There would be an international army. It would punish an aggressor."

"It would break to bits at the first quarrel," said Colonel Chartier. "Every contingent would fight for its own nationality. It would be a riff-raff army, divided against itself. *Pas possible !*"

"Admit, Armand," said Yvonne, "that Papa has the best of the argument. Admit that you and M. Herriot are talking dreams."

Armand answered with a slight impatience.

"I do not admit that, my dear. I see the grim alternative to international law. I see a ravaged France again. I see the downfall of European civilization. If we cannot act wisely by intelligence, let us act wisely by fear."

"A policy of cowardice?" she asked.

He did not answer that, but sat silent while Colonel Chartier denounced the spread of pacifism in France.

It was when he was talking with young Alphonse on Herriot's plan that Yvonne opened the study door one evening. Alphonse was enthusiastically in favour of the plan.

His voice rang out as Yvonne stood there in the doorway.

"It is the hope of the future. It is the only way to peace."

Yvonne stood there smiling with a look of irony at her husband and brother.

"Did I hear the word peace?" she asked. "In that case I must retire. Strange as it may seem, it's a word which leads to conflict between husband and wife!"

"Don't be absurd, Yvonne!" said Alphonse, with brotherly candour.

For a moment an angry light leapt into her eyes. Then she went over to her brother and put her hand on his arm.

"Alphonse," she said, "don't be led away by Armand's pacifism. It's against our family tradition. In any case it's very dangerous."

"I happen to agree with him," answered Alphonse quietly. "But it annoys you, Yvonne, let us avoid the subject."

There is a very good film at the cinema to-night. What about it? A new René Clair, who is a great artist. Will you come?"

"*Enchanté!*" cried Yvonne, forgetting her annoyance.

But Armand had been hurt by her words of warning to this young brother. They were not friendly to him. There was an intellectual gulf between them, growing wider in spite of their love for each other, and his absolute fidelity and unchanging tenderness.

### XXXVIII

That little cloud always lurking in the background because of a difference of opinion about some private work of his to which he had dedicated his mind and heart became a thunder-clap with streaked lightning at the breakfast-table when Armand broke the news to his wife—he had held it back for a week or two—that he had arranged to go to Berlin for six or seven days during the vacation, to take part in a meeting organized by the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*. Several young men from the university of Aix were also going, and one of them was Alphonse, who had been elected as their leader.

Yvonne heard the news with stupefaction. She cried out as though physically hurt.

"That is too much! Do you mean to tell me that you are taking Alphonse to Germany? I cannot believe it."

Armand tried to take her hand across the breakfast-table, but she snatched it away.

"I'm not taking him. He is the leader of his own deputation from Aix. And it's a great opportunity for propaganda on behalf of France. Students from all the universities——"

Yvonne had left the breakfast-table.

"You have perverted my brother's mind!" she cried with passion. "I can never forgive you, Armand. You have used your position to poison young minds. It's an outrage against my family and everything in our blood and history."

It's a disgrace to my father's name which belongs to France."

She dashed out of the room. When Armand went upstairs to plead with her to have some breakfast he found the door locked against him. He went to his mother's room—she took her coffee there in the morning—and told her about this painful incident.

"Can't you make her a little more reasonable, *Maman*?" he asked. "After all, this is not a criminal affair! Alphonse is old enough to have his own philosophy of life. As for me, I cannot forswear my faith. It seems absurd that a question of politics should come between husband and wife."

Madame Gatières shook her head slightly, and stroked his hand as he sat on the side of her bed.

"It is more than a question of politics, Armand. It is, as you admit, a question of faith. It is like religion. There cannot be a perfect affection between husband and wife if they do not believe in the same God and the same Church."

"My father was a sceptic," argued Armand, "and you are a saint, *Maman*. Yet there was a perfect loyalty between you."

"Loyalty, certainly," said his mother. "But we were separated at the church door and in the secret chambers of the mind. It was a great grief to me always, and it made him feel lonely. He stood on one side when I went to the altar. I slipped away from him when I said my prayers. In all spiritual belief we were divided."

"*Maman*," said Armand, "how am I going to deal with this affair? You are a wise woman. I need your help with *Yvonne*."

He bent down to kiss his mother's hand, her transparent hand with blue veins.

"Won't you give up this visit to Berlin, Armand? That would make it very easy."

He was inclined to give up this visit, though he had set his heart on it, believing that it might influence the younger mind in Germany and be an act of some importance in

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history—not his own presence there, but his company of young students from Aix and other universities. He had already prepared a speech addressed to German youth. In any case he was pledged to the society. And Alphonse was very keen on having him, and would not hear of his desertion.

"Yvonne will get over it," he said cheerfully. "After all, she has little Armand Philippe—and it's only for a week."

"She thinks I have perverted your mind," said Armand, with a melancholy smile.

Alphonse laughed at this accusation.

"That's absurd! I admit you gave me my first inspiration. I owe you an enormous debt. But I have now worked out my own faith. I am a convinced pacifist. I am ready and eager to be of service in that cause. It is, after all, the only intelligent outlook on life. War is the defeat of intelligence and the triumph of barbarism. I decline to surrender to the forces of stupidity."

"There are many intelligent people against us," Armand reminded him. "Yvonne is highly intelligent. Two-thirds of France are, perhaps, against us, and among them many fine brains and noble characters."

Alphonse raised his eyebrows.

"Are you weakening, *cher maître*?"

"No! But I see the difficulties more clearly perhaps than you. It is the privilege of the younger mind *not* to see the difficulties, or at least to ignore them. Couldn't you go without me?"

Alphonse smiled and shook his head.

"*Pas possible!* You are our leader. You went through the war. Your Croix de Guerre is a defence against the charge of cowardice. You speak German, thank God! Besides, the leaders of the German groups have advertised you as their star turn. I'll put it all right with Yvonne."

He failed to put it all right with Yvonne. She was reduced to tears after his private conversation with her. He

failed to put it all right with his father. There was an angry scene between them. There were family conferences with uncles and aunts, from which Armand was excluded.

Two of the professors—Barbier and Picard—called on him one evening with strong objections against the peace meeting in Berlin. There were heated words in his study. Barbier was exceedingly offensive. Picard was violent. Armand lost his temper when they accused him of undermining the patriotism of his senior students, two of whom had notified their intention of going with the French delegation. He asked them to leave his study before he had the unpleasant task of throwing them downstairs—foolish words for a pacifist, and very inconsistent with his creed, as he realized afterwards with shame and a gust of painful laughter.

Because of his anger at what he considered to be the reactionary attitude, the really intolerable interference, of these two colleagues, he insisted upon his intention to accompany the French delegation—the Lycée had nothing to do with his actions during vacation—and to uphold the right of his senior students to spend part of their holiday in Germany, if they had their parents' consent and the necessary means.

It became too late to draw back, and in the end Armand and Alphonse departed from Avignon with the other representatives of the *Ligue des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*.

Yvonne kissed her husband very coldly when he went. He drew her close to his breast and held her tight. He was sorry that she wept in his arms as though he were going on some abominable adventure, instead of to a friendly meeting with German boys in Berlin. She made too much fuss about it, he thought. He was frightfully sorry to hurt her like this. He felt a criminal. He hated going when he lifted up little Armand Philippe, who laughed at him. But it was for little Armand Philippe and all the small babes that he was going. So he believed.

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## XXXIX

It was a hopeful and inspiring experience in Berlin, at least in the meetings between the student groups. The German students were extremely friendly, eager and anxious to show their hospitality to their French and English visitors, to explain the German point of view, to ask and answer questions. They were, on the whole, of a good type, athletic, keen, frank and hearty, though some of them were rather seedy, with the pimply faces of unhealthy adolescence, and the look of boys who have overstudied and underfed.

In the debates and discussions there was no trace of hostility or ill-humour. The French students were very favourably impressed by the candour and the desire for comradeship shown by these young Germans. Certainly they put forward claims which raised dangerous and difficult questions. They upheld the official German demand for equality of status in armaments, and insisted that it was unfair and intolerable to keep Germany disarmed and in a continual state of inferiority while most other nations were heavily armed against her. They argued that this inferiority of status among the great Powers was the main cause of bitterness and reaction in Germany, which would lead inevitably to a defeat of liberalism and a return of militarism, unless the grievance were removed from German mentality. They did not advocate the re-arming of Germany. On the contrary, they believed that would be disastrous in its results. But they urged France to lead Europe towards gradual disarmament and a collaboration of nations in establishing an international code of law and a mutual pact of peace. For that reason they were heartily in favour of the Herriot plan. They had much to say about the Polish Corridor, which they described as an "outrage" and a constant source of irritation in German psychology. They warned the French students that this was the powder-magazine of Europe from which another war might start at some moment of tension. They

demanded the return of Upper Silesia, the Saar valley, and the restitution of the German colonies.

The French delegation in this assembly of youth listened to these claims without any sense of shock. Liberal opinion in France, which had been spreading fast in the past year or two, had not shirked these very questions, and had swung to the conviction that there was some justice in the German point of view. Theoretically, this liberal school of thought in France, to which many of the younger minds belonged, was ready to admit—admitted—that the Polish Corridor ought to be removed or modified. They were only checked by the thought that any such revision of the Peace Treaties would arouse the passionate hostility of Poland and the Little Entente, and might lead to war more surely and more immediately than a continuance of the German grievance.

That point of view was expressed very ably and thoughtfully by some of Armand's senior students, and the difficulties were acknowledged by their German comrades.

Armand acted as chairman to some of these discussions. He was loudly cheered by the young German and English students whenever he rose to address them. He wore his Croix de Guerre with palms and his English Military Cross. They seemed to like the look of him—his D'Artagnan look. They had read many of his articles in *Der Friede* and other papers. They listened respectfully to his speeches in German, and were astonished that a French officer should speak their tongue so fluently and with such a good accent.

"It is marvellous, your German, sir," said a good-looking young man with straw-coloured hair.

"I was a prisoner of war in Germany," explained Armand, smiling at him. "Afterwards I was on the Rhine for several years."

Alphonse Chartier made the most brilliant speech of the assembly—at least in the opinion of his brother-in-law, who afterwards translated it into German. He made a great impression on the English delegation, most of whom understood

French crowd, Armand and his standing falling with an in tone, was ner and to a he seen indeed, gestures

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French to some extent, and even on the young German crowd, who were ignorant of what he was saying, until Armand acted as interpreter, but watched his expression and his gestures with intense interest. He had a noble look, standing there on the platform, with one lock of his dark hair falling over his high forehead, and his eyes very luminous with an inner light. His voice was admirable, very musical in tone, and extraordinarily vibrant. Armand knew that he was nervous, but this only intensified his emotional appeal, and to all others but Armand, who knew him so intimately, he seemed to have no trace of self-consciousness. And indeed, he lost that as he warmed to his speech, so that his gestures became more free and moving.

Armand listened with a great emotion, with deep admiration. This boy, this young man, as he was now, was saying all that Armand believed and hoped for the peace of the world and for the heart of youth. He denounced the war—from which they had not yet recovered, which was the cause of the ruin into which civilization had fallen—as a breakdown in human intelligence and a collapse of civilized ideals. As a Frenchman he did not hold Germany as alone in war guilt. All the great Powers shared that guilt, because they piled up armaments against each other and had gone among the high explosives with flaming torches of international rivalry and fear and intrigue, forming combinations against each other, hurling insults at each other, trying to frustrate each other's ambitions, without a thought of the fearful consequences to the young manhood of the world, ignorant of their diplomacy and the victims of their stupidity. None of the statesmen, said Alphonse Chartier, had had the vision or the spiritual power to lead civilization away from this jungle law to some higher conception of human relationship. They were still without this vision. The elder men were again arranging new combinations for a new balance of power which would lead to a new explosion. They were discussing disarmament but increasing their arms. They

were watching a world sinking into economic ruin, behind national barriers which prevented all flow of trade, with millions of men out of work in all countries, with money losing its purchasing power, with producers unable to sell the fruits of the earth to hungry populations, with debts crushing down upon the human drudge, creating an intolerable heritage for posterity, without any control of these forces of unreason, or any serious attempt to avert the downfall of European culture.

"The hands of the old men," said Alphonse Chartier, "are weak on the reins of the fiery horses in this chariot race towards a bottomless pit. It is for youth to seize those reins and to check this stampede. It is time for us to assert our leadership and to establish a new order in the world. I am a Frenchman. I see before me the hereditary enemies of my race. I am their hereditary enemy. My father and forefathers have fought yours on many battlefields. But it is ancient history. It is the history of humanity in the days of tribal conflict. Surely now we have got beyond all that, after the lesson of the last war in which our fathers and our elder brothers died! Science has given us new and enormous powers which may be used for destruction or for the advance of human happiness. How are we going to use them? Shall we destroy each other because of old and foolish feuds, because of national arrogance and pride, or shall we make them the tools of a finer and nobler civilization?"

"I am a Frenchman. I speak here among other Frenchmen of my age. I hold out my hands to you young Germans, to you Englishmen, in a spirit of comradeship, without any sinister memories of ancient enmity, and plead with you to forget the past, to think only of the future, to join in a forward march towards a new era in which intelligence will take control and nations will obey a common law for the preservation of peace and the defence of justice. Here, before you all, I pledge my soul to peace, for which I am ready to suffer or die as men have died for war. There is no need

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of enmity between young France and young Germany, as these debates have shown. We do not wish to kill each other ! We can look in each other's eyes with candour and comradeship. We are doing so. I will never kill a German, whatever may happen in the future. Will you, my German friends, pledge your honour never to kill a Frenchman ? If you make that pledge in your souls, as I have made it in mine, it will be easy to settle other problems and to build a new order based on justice and co-operation."

This speech was received with a clamour of applause. Armand was so moved by it that he felt his heart grow big against his ribs. Some of these young German and English students were surrounding Alphonse and shaking his hand, and patting him on the back.

A tall, middle-aged German elbowed them on one side, and put his arms round Alphonse Chartier. It was Gustav Hoffmann, editor of *Der Friede*.

And another German came on to the platform from the body of the hall. He was a young man of about thirty, tall and fair, with a serious, handsome face on which there were lines of suffering and mental conflict.

He, too, shook hands with Alphonse Chartier, and then turned to Armand, who had not noticed him because his eyes were fixed on that young orator receiving the homage of his audience.

"*Mon cher capitaine ! Quelle joie de vous revoir !*"

It was Otto von Menzel, in whose house Armand had stayed so long at Mainz, in whose house they had begun an intellectual comradeship.

He was ten years older. He was no longer a boy. Time had hardened the lines of his face a little. He was not so slim, but he was still romantic-looking and distinguished.

Armand had written to him. It was no surprise to see him. But it was an enormous pleasure. It was partly for this reason that he had left his wife and babe in Avignon.

*"Mon cher Otto ! Mon camarade ! Mon ami !"*

He embraced this young German and kissed him on both cheeks.

## XL

Otto was married to a charming girl, as she seemed to Armand when he was presented to her.

"I have heard of you so often," she said, holding his hand. "Otto is always singing your praises. And he has told me how much dear Ina loved you. I was her school friend."

This reference to Ina touched Armand profoundly. Her spirit came back to him during those days in Berlin. The sketch he had done of her hung on the wall in Otto's study and reminded him poignantly of her laughing grace, her kind of boyishness.

He stood looking at this sketch in Otto's room when they were alone together for a moment, and tears came into his eyes.

Otto put a hand on his shoulder.

"She spoke of you before she died," he said. "She loved you very much."

"Why did she die?" asked Armand sadly. "She was so young. She was so lovely."

He knew how she had died. She had caught cold by wearing thin shoes, like so many little typist girls, on her way from the office on a rainy night. She had been stinting her food for economy's sake. But that was not what he wanted to know. He wanted to know why life was so cruel, why God allowed such beauty to be slain. What was the answer to all that?

"She worried because she had no letter from you," said Otto. "My mother did not forward them, as I wrote to you with shame. Ina could not understand your silence."

"It was unpardonable," said Armand harshly. "I can never forgive that."

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"My mother is sorry," said Otto. "She asks you to forgive her. It was my father's death which made her do a thing which now she very much regrets."

All that was ten years ago. Ina von Menzel had gone out of Armand's life. She had even gone out of his daily thoughts until this reminder came. He was a married man, and very happy with his wife and babe—very happy except for a little difference of opinion now and then.

They were desperately poor, they said, Otto von Menzel and his wife, yet they entertained him at dinner twice during his stay in Berlin, and although it was very simple there was no squalor or sign of acute poverty in their apartment. The furniture was spotlessly clean and polished and shining, as in all German households. There were some good paintings on the walls. Otto's wife wore pretty frocks which showed her white shoulders. She was, he thought, highly intelligent and joined in their conversation on the state of Europe and international affairs with knowledge and good sense.

Otto was now editor of a German magazine devoted to literature and art. The remuneration was just sufficient to keep his head above water, he said. In any case it was better in Germany now than in the time of inflation, when they had all nearly starved and when Germany nearly went down into anarchy.

Elsa—Otto's wife—shuddered at these reminiscences.

"No one will ever record the agony we suffered," she told her French guest. "It was beyond words. Several girls I knew committed suicide. Life seemed so hopeless and so miserable. And yet it was worse for the older people who had been rich and were now ruined."

Otto shrugged his shoulders, as he had done in the old days at Mainz.

"Now it is worse again for the young people. This unemployment—*Arbeitslosigkeit*—is dreadful. We have six million workless. They get a beggarly dole, and yet I have most pity for the white-collar class. They come down from

the universities and search vainly for work. Thousands of them have taken to a tramp life. They go round with a *Wanderbuch*—a police permission to wander in search of work. Needless to say they don't find it. What has happened to the world, *mon cher capitaine*? What is going to happen? The economic situation is appalling in all countries—except perhaps in France."

Armand did not except France from this general observation. He told Otto of the bankruptcy of the hotels and establishments in the South of France. He described the villas up for sale, the flight of tourists, the increasing taxation, the dwindling trade.

"And yet," said Otto, unconvinced, "France is less hurt than other nations. France is more securely based on the land. It has a better balanced rhythm of life—more than industrialized countries such as Germany, dependent on export trade."

"France," said Elsa von Menzel, "makes things very difficult for Germany. Will you forgive me, *mon capitaine*, if I say that France is the most egotistical and self-centred nation in Europe?"

Otto laughed and protested against this accusation.

"My dear Elsa! Our friend here is a Frenchman."

"But broad-minded," said Elsa. "Generous-hearted, Otto, as you have always told me."

Armand did not argue the point. He smiled at this young woman and demanded reasons.

"France," said Elsa, "is convinced that she is the only civilized nation in the world."

"That is perhaps true," said Otto. "France is certainly more civilized than Germany. We have a strain of brutality in us. The old Germanic gods were heavy-handed, and they still have their temples in the German race mind."

"France is cynical and logical," said Elsa, "without faith in God or man. The French religion is *La Patrie*. They think only of the French interests, French rights, French money,

French ideas. Or have I been wrongly informed? We Germans are so ignorant!"

Armand gave a light groan, followed by a laugh.

"Isn't that so in every country? Do any of them act from altruism? Perhaps England has some claim to that virtue now and then. The English people act by sentiment rather than by intelligence. Sometimes they are generous beyond self-interest—and beyond wisdom. And yet at other times they are business people who look after themselves first and proclaim their own interests as essential righteousness! But I do not profess to understand them, though I have an English brother-in-law. They are very contradictory. I find them inexplicable."

"France and England have a national unity," said Otto. "They have a traditional continuity of thought and instinct and order. In Germany we are divided against ourselves. There are five armies in Germany to-day, all seething with hatred against each other. Our political parties are irreconcilable. Our separate States have not been amalgamated into one nation, in spite of the war when they fought together. All of us are waiting, with our nerves on edge, for an explosion which may happen to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow."

So they talked that evening, and on other evenings in Berlin when Armand invited them to dinner at restaurants and sat with them on the terraces of cafés along the Kurfürstendamm where Alphonse Chartier and other students joined them.

Alphonse was greatly taken with Otto von Menzel. They became very friendly, and Armand, watching them, was struck by the strangeness of this new comradeship between the brother of Ina who had loved him and the brother of Yvonne whom he loved.

There was no outward sign of poverty in Berlin. There is never an outward sign of poverty in Berlin, and one has to look for it in the *Nacht Asyl* and other haunts of wretchedness. Everyone seemed to have some margin of money for amusement and pleasure. The restaurants were thronged. There

were cheerful crowds down the Friedrichstrasse. There were many motor-cars in Unter den Linden, where at night young lovers went hand in hand through the glades.

Sitting and talking with his friends and students outside some café or inside some beer-hall, Armand studied the faces of these Germans. He had seen such types under steel helmets. He had seen them marching as prisoners of war across shell-swept fields. One of them, sitting at a table near him, was, he thought, like the man who had wanted to run him through with a bayonet. The faces of the elder men revealed suffering and anxiety.

Hearing him speak French to Alphonse, they stared at him with silent hostility. Would it ever be possible for France to make friends with them? Would they accept a generous action with a generous spirit? Some of these German boys were friendly, good-natured and attractive, frank, manly fellows who spoke in terms of idealism and comradeship.

"We must appeal to the younger mind," thought Armand. "We must give a lead to German youth. We must encourage the liberal thought of Germany by generous gestures which will disarm the old reactionaries. France has encouraged reaction in Germany. That occupation of the Ruhr was a gift to the Junkers. Poincaré adopted a fatal policy."

Below the terrace of the Excelsior one evening there was a procession of young men in brown shirts—two or three thousand of them marching four abreast. On their left arms was a curious sign. It was the Swastika—the sign of the crookéd cross.

"Who are those?" asked Armand.

It was Elsa von Menzel who answered.

"Nazis. Hitler's National Socialists. Brownshirts."

Armand stared at them as they passed the street-lamps. They were all young, athletic-looking lads with square shoulders, sturdy, marching with military precision.

Otto spoke in a low voice.

"Hitler is gaining ground. Every election brings him closer to power. One day he may sweep the country."

"And then?" asked Armand.

Otto shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"God knows! Strange things would happen. It would not be the same Germany. It would be a social revolution."

Gustav Hoffmann joined them. He sat by the side of Armand and spoke also of those marching Nazis in a low voice.

"They don't like the Jews," he said. "I am a Jew. It is perhaps natural that I have no love for them. They are, of course, mad. Their leader is mad. We are living in a mad world, my friend. I think I have said that before!"

Armand was not quite satisfied by that explanation. Those marching young men did not look like lunatics. They looked very healthy and normal specimens of German manhood.

"What is the secret of Hitler's magic in the minds of German youth?" he asked.

It was Gustav Hoffmann who answered again.

"He is a spellbinder. He promises them all the things they lack—national pride, German unity, work and wages, hope in the future. I understand those spell words. They are magical in the imagination of young men who are conscious of the degradation and despair of unemployment and national disintegration. He promises to tear up the Peace Treaties which they believe to be the cause of their inferiority among nations. He promises to repudiate all the foreign debts which hang about our necks. He promises to throttle the profiteers, the bankers, and the Jews, against whom he inflames them by his fiery words. He pours contempt upon the Reichstag which has failed to provide work or to break our shackles. And beyond all that, he appeals to the mysticism of the German mind—its craving for some romantic faith—its Wagnerian mistiness through which comes the elfin notes of old Germanic tales, and the ghosts of old Germanic heroes. Hitler is Siegfried with a toothbrush

moustache ! This little Austrian upstart is convinced that he speaks with the voice of a prophet and is destined to restore the glory of the German race purified of alien blood. I understand that all Jews are to be sterilized !”

He spoke with extreme bitterness, but with a nervous glance now and then over his shoulder lest anyone should hear.

Otto von Menzel heard something of what he said and added a few words.

“There is something idealistic in his programme, in spite of everything. He has taken over some of the ideas of our Youth Movement. That is why he appeals to young enthusiasts. Like everything in human nature, it is not wholly evil or reactionary, otherwise he would have no following among the younger crowd. I have modified my own views a little.”

Gustav Hoffmann was startled. He jerked back in his chair and spoke harshly.

“*Et tu, Brute !*”

Otto von Menzel laughed uneasily.

“Oh, I don’t wear the swastika on my left arm. Don’t look so shocked, my dear Hoffmann !”

It was the last night of Armand’s visit to Berlin. A crowd of German students came to the station to give farewell cheers to their foreign comrades. There was a great deal of handshaking and laughter. The words “*Auf Wiedersehen !*” were spoken a thousand times. The French students shouted out “*Au revoir, camarades !*” The English students stood about smiling and reserved and shy.

Otto von Menzel waited by the door of Armand’s carriage until the train started. He chatted with Alphonse Chartier, with whom he had formed a quick friendship. The two young men clasped hands at the shout of “*Aufsteigen !*” Otto and Armand embraced.

“Let us work for peace,” said Armand. “Peace between your country and mine.”

“It has been splendid to see you again !” said Otto. “I

have never forgotten the old days of Mainz. You were my hero. You are still my hero. And I am still a Francophile."

Gustav Hoffmann hurried up in time for a few last words with Armand.

They were anxious words.

"Tell France to be generous," he said. "Otherwise liberal thought will die in Germany."

Armand smiled at him. The experience of his visit had given him a new hope. The meetings of the international students had been inspiring, encouraging, the revelation of a new spirit working in the younger mind.

"Youth will build a new world!" he answered.

The guard blew his whistle. The German students cheered again. It was the end of the visit to Berlin.

## XLI

Yvonne had kissed her husband very coldly when he went to Berlin. Her kiss was still cold when he came back after that wonderful week when he had been so stirred by the friendship, the cordiality, the enthusiasm for peace shown by the German Youth Movement. At their last meeting they had passed a joint resolution denouncing war as a method of national argument, even for the redress of acknowledged grievances or revision of unjust treatment. It was in Armand's opinion a great step forward on behalf of world peace, more important in its significance than other pacts passed at Geneva, because it represented the younger mind.

"Honestly, my darling," he said on his first afternoon at home again, "it was a magnificent demonstration of a new spirit moving in Europe. Alphonse made a speech which stirred the audience tremendously. He was typical of the best mind in France, chivalrous, noble, intelligent and spirited. You would have been proud of him."

Yvonne did not reveal any pleasure in her brother's triumph.

"Please don't speak about it, Armand," she pleaded. "Let us talk about other things. How, for instance, do you like my new hat?"

He thought her new hat ravishing. But he did not like the way in which her eyes avoided looking into his, nor a kind of sharpness which crept into her voice now and then when they discussed things of trivial importance. If he disagreed with her ever so slightly she seemed to resent it. It was unfortunate. It made him feel uneasy. And yet at other times she was quite gay and responded to his tenderness and love. There seemed no cloud on the horizon when they played together with little Armand Philippe, crawling on the floor between them, beginning to walk with the help of a friendly hand, beginning to reveal personality and a sense of humour which they found adorable.

Then out of the blue came a thunderbolt which struck him at the breakfast-table one morning and made him feel profoundly disturbed and shaken. He was afraid to tell Yvonne, who was unaware of this bolt from the blue while she fed Armand Philippe with toast dipped into his hot milk.

Birds were twittering on the window-sill. Brilliant sunshine streamed through the leaded panes of this old house. A boy went whistling down the rue du Château. Yvonne in a blue pinafore over her frock was laughing at her small urchin, who was greedy for his meal. Armand's mother was looking at an unopened letter and wondering from whom it might be, a little habit about which he had so often chaffed her.

It was a scene of happiness. But there was something he had just read in a newspaper—the *Gazette d'Avignon*—which, he knew, would create unhappiness between him and Yvonne, and between him and his social circle. It was only a brief paragraph in small type. It was only by accident that he had glanced at it. Now he read it again more intently, and with increased emotion.

"Some more coffee, my dear?" asked his mother.



He passed his cup to her with a slightly unsteady hand. He was trembling. He felt rather cold. He read that paragraph again with brooding eyes.

Four young citizens of Avignon, belonging to well-known and worthy families, have refused to perform their military service. They are Alphonse Chartier, Louis Marchand, Bertrand Meunier, and Hippolyte Gonnet. They have been placed under arrest and will be brought before a military tribunal. There have been other cases lately in many provincial towns, and this wave of pacifism and refusal of service is causing grave anxiety not only to public opinion but to the French Government.

None of these young men had said a word to him about this intention. Several times lately they had mentioned quite casually that their time of service was drawing near and he had commiserated with them on having to interrupt their careers for this purpose. They had kept perfectly quiet about a decision which must have been in their own minds when he was talking to them. That was because they did not want to incriminate him in any way, or because they did not want to be influenced by any arguments against a dangerous adventure. He was certain that the first reason was the real one. Their loyalty to him had made them silent. They would be able to say that he knew nothing about their intention. They were anxious to keep him out of grave trouble.

"Is anything the matter, my dear?" asked his mother.

"Why, *Maman*?"

"You look as if you had read some bad news."

Yvonne popped the last bit of toast into Armand Philippe's mouth.

"Has Germany declared war?" she asked with a challenging smile.

Armand passed over the paper.

"You had better read that," he said gravely. "It's rather serious."

Yvonne read the paragraph and her face went dead-white. She dropped the paper and gave a little cry.

"What has happened?" asked Madame Gatières anxiously. "My dears, tell me. Yvonne, my dearest!"

Yvonne was quite silent for a moment. She totally ignored her mother-in-law. Then suddenly she turned and flashed out an accusation against her husband.

"It's your fault, Armand. It is you who are guilty. It is you who have led my brother into this ruin and dishonour."

"I had nothing to do with it," said Armand. "I give you my word of honour. Alphonse said nothing to me about his refusal of service. I took it for granted he would go."

"Your ideas are behind it," said Yvonne. "I told you before you were perverting his mind. You took him to Germany. It is your influence which has made him do this mad thing."

"We have not discussed it," said Armand. "I swear to you he has not said a word to me about it."

"You are the spirit behind it," said Yvonne. "I can never forgive you. What will my father think? It will kill him."

"Yvonne!" cried Madame Gatières. "I implore you! What is this all about? What has happened to dear Alphonse?"

Yvonne answered very coldly.

"Alphonse has followed the lead of your dear son. He has refused to do his military service. He has been arrested. My family has been disgraced. It is treachery to France by one who bears my father's name."

Suddenly she wept, and Armand felt his heart give a lurch. He tried to comfort her, but she repulsed him passionately. Armand Philippe in his high chair set up a howl. He was aware of some quarrel between his parents, some disorder in the life around him. Yvonne seized him with a strange roughness and carried him screaming out of the room.

"Oh, my dear!" said Madame Gatières. "This is very dreadful!"

Armand nodded gloomily.

"Yes, it is serious."

## XLII

It was serious, not only for Alphonse Chartier and Louis Marchand, but for Armand Gatières, professor of history in the Lycée of Avignon. The Governing Board of the Lycée held an investigation to which Armand was summoned. They had taken evidence from the Director and from M. Barbier and M. Picard regarding the peace propaganda of their fellow professor and the branch of the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre* which he had formed among his students. The evidence given by M. Barbier and M. Picard was not favourable to Armand. It made his blood boil because of its sinister suggestions. Picard, that offensive man, charged him openly with inciting his students to disobedience of French law and disloyalty to France. Armand was closely questioned about the visit to Berlin and asked to make a detailed report thereon.

Threatening and abusive letters reached him from the parents of some of his students, and one letter which he read with more attention was from an uncle of Louis—an Abbé of Avignon—who accused him of exercising a dangerous and subversive influence upon the minds of young men, not only in Avignon but throughout France, by means of his activities on behalf of the *Ligue Internationale des Jeunes Contre la Guerre*.

"My nephew," wrote the Abbé, "has spoken to me sometimes about your ideals and propaganda. He has ridiculed my warnings against your influence, which I have always regarded as unhealthy and immoral. I hesitate to write so frankly and so harshly, but I am deeply distressed by the disgrace which has befallen my nephew, by the agony which it inflicts upon his poor mother, and by my own sense of indignation."

On the morning following the publication of the paragraph in the *Gazette d'Avignon*, two staff officers called upon Armand with an interrogatory which they desired to embody

in a report to the Minister of the Interior who had asked for details. They were very polite to an ex-officer of Chasseurs Alpins with whose war record they were familiar. They begged him to excuse their questions. It was, of course, their duty to throw as much light as possible on this painful affair. They were extremely anxious to spare him any unpleasant suspicions.

"You admit, *mon capitaine*, that you have invited some of your students to join this Peace Society which recently sent a delegation to Berlin?"

Armand admitted frankly and fully that he had been working, and would continue to work, for international peace. To that extent he had used what influence he possessed upon the minds of young men at the Lycée and elsewhere. But he had never incited them to refuse military service or to be disloyal to France. He himself was not a pacifist in the full sense of the word. He believed that there were times when it was necessary to resist aggression and evil by force of arms, for the defence of civilized ideas and the liberty of peoples. He believed in M. Herriot's plan for an international police force—now rejected by other nations. On the other hand, he could not interfere with the conscience of young men if it led them to a refusal of military service as a spiritual gesture needing the highest quality of courage and sacrifice.

"You wish us to write down those words, Professor?" asked one of the staff officers. "I should be glad to give you the opportunity of withdrawing them. They are, if I may say so, extremely dangerous to your reputation and career."

"They express my most profound conviction," said Armand.

"I regret that, *mon capitaine*," said the staff officer gravely and courteously.

Colonel Chartier was one of those who called. He was shown up into Armand's study. Yvonne had been in bed all day with a headache.

Colonel Chartier ignored the outstretched hand of his son-in-law.

"I demand an explanation of this most infamous affair," he said in a rasping voice.

"Explanation with regard to what aspect of it, sir?" asked Armand coldly.

"Every aspect!" said Colonel Chartier harshly. "Do you not understand that your influence over my son has led him into a criminal act that will ruin his career for ever?"

"He is a young man of strong character," said Armand. "I cannot flatter myself that he acts only according to the ideas I may discuss with him. On the contrary, he has a nobility of mind and spirit which fill me with humility."

"You are evading your responsibility, sir," said Colonel Chartier with repressed violence which deepened the colour beneath his skin and made his eyes glint like steel. "You were my son's teacher when he was of an impressionable age. You went out of your way to get a hold upon him. Yvonne used to mention how much he worshipped you. It was a family joke. Now it is a family tragedy. I regret the day when you first sat at my table, when I regarded you as a man of honour, loyal to France after brave service. I was grossly deceived. You have not only brought disgrace upon a distinguished name, but you have led my son to ruin and caused the greatest grief to my dear Yvonne."

Armand was deeply hurt. There was an angry scene between him and his father-in-law which he afterwards regretted.

Yvonne would not speak to him.

### XLIII

Armand Gatières was present as a witness at the trial of his former students before the military tribunal. The court was crowded with his fellow citizens of Avignon and with young university men from Aix-en-Provence.

On the way to the court Armand had been cut dead by several old friends, among whom was Colonel de la Prade,

his former chief, for whom he had had considerable affection. Their eyes met. Armand saluted. Colonel de la Prade did not acknowledge that salute from a man who had served through the war with him, whom he had kissed on both cheeks when he received his Croix de Guerre, whom he had embraced when he came back from an attack on the Somme with a remnant of his company, after holding a trench for three days and nights under devastating fire which had made a shambles in that ditch.

Upon Armand's appearance in court there was a round of applause from some of his former students, while others hissed. This was sternly silenced by the presiding officer, Colonel Balfourier.

Alphonse Chartier was the first prisoner to be brought before the court, and Armand suffered an agony of emotion when he was examined, standing there under the guard of two Chasseurs with fixed bayonets. He looked very handsome, noble, and self-assured. Several times he smiled over to Armand, reassuringly, and then at the crowd of fellow students who were in the public gallery, excited, emotional, hardly to be restrained from noisy demonstrations.

He answered the questions put to him modestly and courageously.

"You say you have an objection of conscience to military service?"

"Yes, *mon colonel*."

"You are, then, an anarchist?"

"No, *mon colonel*."

"You do not admit that it is anarchy to disobey the laws of France in order to assert your private judgment?"

"It is a question of conscience, *mon colonel*. Until men of my age refuse to submit to military service there will be no chance of peace in Europe. It is not disloyalty to France—for which I have a passionate devotion—but loyalty to a new spirit which seeks to break down the old frontiers of hatred."

"Illusion!" said the Colonel in a rasping voice.

For a moment he was silent, twisting the points of his moustache. Then he lashed out a harsh question.

"You are not ashamed to be branded as a coward?"

Alphonse Chartier smiled.

"It is not in the tradition of my family, *mon colonel*."

The eyes of the presiding officer stared at him coldly and yet with a kind of surprise and grudging admiration. That was true about the tradition of his family. The colonel had read some French history. He knew something about this young man's ancestors. And as this prisoner stood there in court, tall, debonair, with squared shoulders, with a fine poise, it was difficult to think of him as a coward.

"If your country is attacked by our hereditary enemies," asked the colonel, "are you prepared to shelter behind the courage of your comrades and to see the France you say you love ravaged by the invaders—as happened in 1914—while you skulk behind the lines?"

For a moment Alphonse hesitated. It was such a long argument this! It was so difficult to answer it in a few words.

"*Mon colonel*," he said, "there will be no such place as behind the lines in the next war. Women and children and the centres of population will be massacred and mangled by high explosives from aerial bombardment. They will be suffocated by poison gas in their cellars. There will be no safety for the individual however brave, or however cowardly. It is to prevent such horrors which menace civilization that I and my fellow prisoners here have refused military service as a moral gesture of contempt for a system of thought which believes that hereditary enemies must always be enemies and that high explosives are an admirable substitute for high intelligence."

There was an outburst of laughter and applause from the public gallery, sternly silenced again.

The presiding officer had listened to this speech without interruption, but his tanned skin flushed slightly with suppressed anger. He spoke harshly.

"The law of France does not admit of gestures of moral contempt from its citizens. Those who make such gestures are criminals. They set themselves up against the State. They are the enemies of the Republic. They are traitors to France."

With his comrades, Louis Marchand, Bertrand Meunier and Hippolyte Gonnet, Alphonse Chartier was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. As he stood at attention to receive sentence this young man—who undoubtedly was the leader of this revolt against military service—glanced over at his brother-in-law and smiled again. But Armand Gatières was blinded by his tears.

When he returned home, letting himself in with his latch-key, there were two letters waiting for him. One was a dismissal from the Lycée. He had expected it, and let it drop to the floor beside his desk. The other was from Yvonne. She had left him and had taken little Armand Philippe to her father's house.

"I can never see you again," she wrote. "I cannot forgive you because of Alphonse."

The house was very quiet. Armand stood in his study with that letter from his wife. He did not utter any cry to break that silence. But all the colour ebbed from his face and he stood like a man who had been sentenced to death.

The door opened and Madame Gatières stood there.

"Oh, my dear!" she said in a pitiful voice.

It was then that he gave a cry. It was the cry which many Frenchmen made during the world war when they fell mortally wounded on the battlefield or lay with death creeping up to their hearts in the wards of military hospitals.

"*Maman!*"

She held him in her arms while he wept.

#### XLIV

Armand Gatières carried a broken heart about with him. That kind of wound is invisible to passers-by, and he was



careful to hide it. People who passed him in the streets of Avignon saw only his handsome face, which reminded some of them of D'Artagnan, and the smile in his brown eyes if he smiled at them—at former students of the Lycée from which he was now expelled, or young men from the university of Aix, home for a few days or a few weeks. Many of them came up to clasp his hand with expressions of sympathy or boyish abuse of the authorities who had dismissed their best professor of history. They were not aware of the broken heart he carried about with him.

Yvonne refused to see him. When he called at her father's house he was not admitted. She had taken Armand Philippe with her—his son, whom he adored. Once, in a moment of madness, he had forced his way past a frightened maidservant and had demanded to see his wife. But his wife had gone away with her father and her small boy.

"Tell me their address!" said Armand.

The frightened maidservant did not know their address. She believed the family had gone to Paris for a month or two—because of the trial, she said.

Then letters came from Yvonne, answering his. She wrote saying that the thought of her brother in prison turned her blood cold. She could not acquit Armand of the real guilt. It was by his influence that Alphonse had refused military service. How could she ever forgive her husband for such a crime and a tragedy? She begged at least for some time before she saw him again, lest her anger and her grief should make her say words which would make things more hateful between them.

There were tender passages in her letters which moved him terribly because they were in such contrast to her other words and reminded him so poignantly of the happiness they had had. She herself thought back to that happiness.

*We were so happy (she wrote), apart from our difference in views about this peace propaganda. Oh, Armand, I was so proud*

*of you, so grateful for your love ! It is inconceivable to me that we should be divided by political ideas. It seems an absurd cause of separation between husband and wife who were loyal and devoted as we have been. But how can I give you my love again when my brother is branded in the whole of France by this terrible disgrace which is your fault ? I warned and pleaded with you. I begged you not to take him to Berlin. I asked you not to go yourself. I wept when you went. But you, who are so gentle and chivalrous in everything else, have shown an obstinacy about this correspondence with the Germans, this defeatism and pacifism, which is immovable. It has made you cruel to me. It has broken my heart. It has wrecked my father's happiness. It has made me hate you in spite of all my love. If I were loyal to you in this affair I should be disloyal to all my own beliefs, to every instinct in my blood, and to our dear France.*

*That sounds fantastic as I write it. There seems something false about it—something theatrical—and yet I know it is true. I was brought up in a certain code. I can't betray it without a betrayal of my own soul. I am your wife. I am the mother of little Armand Philippe. But I am also a Frenchwoman who hates the enemies of France, with whom you wish to make friends. And I am the sister of a boy who has been sentenced as a criminal because of your incitement. It makes it very hard to forgive you, Armand. I feel now that I cannot forgive you, although I long for our love again, and for our dear home life before this frightful thing happened to us.*

It was a lonely man who crossed the Channel one day and went to an English house in Sussex, where his sister lived. Lucille was comforting in her sympathy. When he poured out his heart to her, she took his side ; so much, indeed, that he had to defend Yvonne from her anger and reproaches. He explained how natural it was that she should feel so deeply about this tragic affair of her brother. He reminded Lucille of his wife's family pride, about which she had so often jested, finding it comical, yet whose spirit was in her blood. He found something splendid—yet mistaken—

in her devotion to a code which she believed to be loyalty to France.

"It is egotism!" cried Lucille. "It is the narrow nationalism which is making us disliked by other nations. England has become pro-German because of French intolerance and cowardice. Every time a French politician shouts out that word 'Security!' my husband's friends smile. They ask me how much more security France wants against an unarmed nation. They think it is France which stands between the world and disarmament."

"And yet they rejected Herriot's plan!" said Armand gloomily. "Their statesmen at Geneva received it with icy courtesy and put it on one side. They have been ready to give up all the weapons which are harmful to them—submarines, for instance—but they won't give up weapons which they consider necessary for their own interests—as, for instance, bombing aeroplanes for the correction of Arab villages and Indian rebels!"

Lucille laughed. She was glad to drag Armand into an argument. It was better for him than brooding melancholy.

"They are, I admit, illogical! They think like that. It is not hypocrisy."

"It is extraordinarily like hypocrisy," said Armand. "Its effects are the same."

"Sometimes I am worried," said Lucille. "Wherever I go I hear hard words against France at English dinner-tables. Even my husband, who loves France because he loves me, is impatient and thinks the Germans have justice on their side. He tells me that if another war happened he truly believes England would remain neutral or side with Germany."

Armand groaned slightly.

"That is an unpleasant thought. It makes it more necessary for France to prevent another war. Shall we go and play with that small boy of yours? He is adorable."

It was a pleasure to him to play with his English nephew,

who took a great fancy to this French uncle and even learned a few sentences in French which he said very prettily. Lucille was touched to see her brother walking about the garden with a small chubby hand tucked into his, while he listened very seriously and courteously to the child's chatter, taking a great interest in his rabbits, his puppy, his toys and his picture-books. But by a quick sigh, a sudden look of melancholy, Lucille knew that he had suffered even from this friendship with her son, because he was thinking of little Armand Philippe from whom he was parted by the temper of his wife. In the opinion of Lucille, Armand's wife was a lady who would have been the better for a good whipping, but her views on this subject were influenced by her English environment, hostile to French politics and French fears.

It was in England, in this country house, that Armand had another blow which staggered him. It was a crashing blow to his intellectual convictions and to his life's work after the war for which he had suffered and was suffering.

It was something which was happening in Germany—a black reaction, a revival of evil forces, a new tyranny, a madness which might plunge the world into war again. So it looked to him as he stared at the headlines of English newspapers and listened to the talk in this English house.

The German Fascists under Hitler, those "Nazis", as they were called, had swept the country in an election which followed the burning of the Reichstag by Communists or, as the French and English newspapers did not hesitate to say, by *agents provocateurs*. Hitler, that madman, as Gustav Hoffmann had called him a hundred times, was Chancellor of the German Reich, with von Papen on one side of him and Hugenburg, the leader of the Nationalists, on the other. It was a government of extreme reaction. Already the Nazis were denouncing liberty in every form. They were declaring war against all Jews, all pacifists, all liberal-minded men. They were proclaiming those strange and dark ideas of Aryanism

and the Nordic race which Armand had first heard from Lieutenant Meyer in the days of the Ruhr, and afterwards from Otto von Menzel and Gustav Hoffmann. They were establishing the code of the bully in every German town, smashing Jewish shops, beating Jews, suppressing liberal newspapers, arresting leaders of intellectual thought.

The German people seemed to have gone insane. They were hailing this as a liberation, as a breaking of chains, as a new gospel. They were worshipping that Austrian spellbinder with a toothbrush moustache as though they had found their prophet. They called him *Der Führer*—the Leader. Millions of arms were outstretched as he passed, with the shout of "*Heil Hitler!*" The sign of the swastika was on every flag and every young man's arm—the sign of the crookéd cross which Armand had watched in a procession of German youth not long ago in Berlin.

The English newspapers were filled with reports of brutalities, beatings, arrests, suicides, murders. Jews were fleeing from the country. Great scientists who happened to be Jews had been expelled from universities and hospitals and laboratories. Von Papen—a man with an unpleasant record—had made a revolting speech, in which he glorified war as the training-ground of youth, and sneered at men who wished to die in their beds, and said that the duty of German motherhood was to raise sons to fight for the Fatherland. A young Nazi had killed his own brother who was a Communist. An Austrian lady had been stripped and beaten. Young bullies were going about with iron rods in rubber tubes, flogging political opponents, breaking their arms, dragging them into cellars where they were bashed and brutally used. Bands of Nazis were invading the forbidden zones across their frontiers. Danzig, the city of the Polish Corridor, was in a ferment, and the German populations were marching and singing the old battle-songs. The Swastika flag had been raised above the *Rathhaus*. Hitler's lieutenants—men of sinister record, according to the English press—were demanding

equality of arms, the revision of the Peace Treaties, the repudiation of war debts, the return of the colonies.

Day after day Armand read these reports with stupefaction. It was possible that some of those brutalities were exaggerated. Germans were already denying them. But they could not deny their intolerance against the Jews, their appeal to extreme Nationalism and racial egotism, their suppression of pacifist and liberal newspapers, their abandonment of liberty, their hark back to the old gods of Prussianism. Where was the Youth Movement in whose idealism he had believed? Where was liberal thought in Germany? Was there any sign from those young men with whom he had corresponded, those students who had attended the debates in Berlin, cheering their French and English comrades, pledging themselves to peace? They made no sign. There seemed to be no spiritual resistance to this social revolution which put Germany back into medievalism unless all that was written about it was wrong.

At his brother-in-law's dinner-table he heard comments from English guests—country gentlemen and their wives, ex-officers, elderly peers, the sons of professional men.

"Germany has gone mad."

"Germany has betrayed the world again."

"It is the old Prussianism under a new name. France was right after all. You can't do anything about a people like that. They have a strain of brutality in them."

"The only thing to do is to smash them. France ought to march in and give them hell!"

"It's a black reaction in the heart of Europe," said Arthur Marshall sombrely. "France won't disarm now. Who could ask her? It looks as though we shall see another war. I don't like the outlook at all. Anything may happen."

Armand sat silent. These were the people whom Lucille had told him were pro-German. Until a few weeks ago they had been scoffing at French fears for "Security", impatient of French nervousness about disarmament. Now they had swung round. All their sympathy was for France.

A lady next to him spoke in a quiet voice in excellent French.

"I am all on the side of France!"

"*Très aimable!*" said Armand dryly.

"You know the Germans better than we do. We have been ridiculously sentimental about them. Do you think there will be war?"

"It mustn't happen," said Armand. "I refuse to believe there will be war. I refuse to believe in the deliberate suicide of Europe."

He spoke sharply, so that she turned her head to glance at him.

"It may come upon us," she said, "if the German Nazis cross the Polish Corridor."

"Are you looking forward to another massacre of the world's youth?" asked Armand icily.

The English lady did not notice his tragic irony.

"It's a terrible thought," she said. "I have a young son. He was twenty last birthday. I am beginning to get afraid."

"It is time to be afraid," said Armand. "It will be a pity if your son is disembowelled by high explosives."

This lady next to him—he had not learnt her name, which was difficult for a Frenchman—looked into his eyes and he saw that he had frightened her. He noticed that she was very young to have a son of twenty, and that she had the colour of an English rose.

"Is there anything we can do?" she asked.

"It might be well to keep sane in this mad world," he answered. "But that, of course, is very difficult. It is an infectious disease, this madness."

He retired early to his room. For an hour or more he stood at the window of his bedroom, staring out into Lucille's garden, but seeing nothing of its enchantment where tall beech trees were silvered by moonlight and the close-cut hedges were black above the lawns.

Someone downstairs had said, "So France was right after



all !” Someone else—Lucille’s husband—had said, “It looks as though we shall see another war.”

So all his work for peace had been nothing but futility ! Alphonse was in prison for refusing military service because of his pledge never to kill a German. Rather foolish that !—if the Germans began to kill Frenchmen again. Yvonne had gone, taking Armand Philippe with her. He had been dismissed from the Lycée for preaching peace, for trying to shape out some new system of international justice, for trying to break down hatred in the minds of young Germans ! How very absurd to be crucified for a false faith ! How ridiculous to go about with a broken heart because of a belief in human intelligence which did not exist, and because he had dedicated himself to an illusion, a mirage, a mockery, which was the dream of international peace based on the comradeship of youth for the safeguarding of civilization. Youth had betrayed all that—German youth who had cheered Alphonse Chartier, now martyred for his faith—which was, after all, a folly—the vain martyrdom of a noble mind.

“*Jésus-Christ !*” said Armand Gatières, ex-captain of Chasseurs, in the silence of an English night.

He was angry. He was bitter, and felt his heart bleed with a new agony.

So there was to be war again before very long ! It would be a hideous kind of war, worse than the last. On his last visit to Paris he had talked with one of his friends in the Air Ministry. He knew all about the inventions, that young man. He had been very glib over a luncheon-table in the *Restaurant du Cheval Pie*. He had described the aeroplanes which could be sent by wireless ray, without pilots, to drop bombs by a delicate clockwork arrangement over any objective. Of course, he said, the first objective would be the centres of industry and the seat of government. It was unfortunate, he explained, that Paris was more vulnerable than Berlin, being nearer to the frontier.

The next war would begin without formal declaration.



The first sign of it would be the drone of engines high above the reach of anti-aircraft guns. There would be a flight of bombers, thousands of them. They would drop explosive and incendiary bombs which would spread a devouring flame extremely rapid in its advance from street to street. Paris—or Berlin—could be reduced to dust and cinders in a few hours. The people would rush down to their cellars and a new gas would follow them down, burning off their clothes, burning through their masks, if they had any, burning up their lungs. It would be mainly a war from the air, said this knowledgeable young man. The hostile air fleets would try to dodge each other, try to get a surprise attack. Of course Germany wasn't ready yet. Perhaps in two years—at most in five years . . .

"Those poisonous politicians!" said Armand, speaking aloud again. "May they be mutilated first! May they be choked first! May they be first to lie with their bowels torn out!"

He was angry. In his soul he cursed the men who governed the nations of Europe.

They had done nothing to lead human intelligence to a higher plane. They had done everything to drag it down to the level of the cave-man mind. They had worshipped the old tribal fetishes. They had stirred up old tribal hatreds. They had looked out upon a new and changing world with medieval minds—the minds of robber barons and rival slave-traders.

All these little nations created out of the ruin of old Empires had barricaded themselves behind high ramparts of national egotism, recruiting their little armies, drilling their peasants, ruining themselves to buy arms and armaments. The Peace Treaties had been the battle-plans for the next war. There had been no vision of a cleaner and nobler phase of civilization based upon international justice and a common code of law.

France was guilty of this reaction in Germany. Poincaré had created Hitler. The adventure in the Ruhr had been a call to German vengeance. He had seen the hatred it

caused. He had seen German blood turn to gall and venom because of that misery and humiliation. There had been hundreds of suicides, thousands of deaths from starvation, millions of distracted minds in Germany, because the stranglehold in the Ruhr had led to the inflation and worthlessness of German money. And after that, when things were getting better, when Briand was talking to Stresemann, when France was getting liberal, the leaders of Europe had refused all revision of treaties which had created the Polish Corridor and put millions of Austrians and Hungarians under the rule of nations who treated them as they had been treated by their own tyrants, denied all liberty and the rights to their own speech.

These little potentates, these leaders, these old men with old ideas, had brought the world to ruin and were digging themselves in to prevent the world's recovery. They were raising tariffs to increase the ruin. In the name of patriotism and national interests they were stopping the wheels of industry and barricading the old highways of trade. Their financiers and their bankers had played with false money like gamblers and crooks, and in many countries millions of unemployed men dragged about their ill-fed bodies searching for work in a world where human labour was unwanted, where the skill of hand and eye was useless, where youth with its eagerness and strength had no chance of finding a place, and were hopeless and despairing on the very threshold of manhood.

These leaders of the world, these smug, bland statesmen in black coats, these vote-hunting politicians—might they be blasted first by the flaming breath of war, if it came.

They had created a state of things in which nations were poverty-stricken because they had too much gold, and masses went hungry because there was too much food, and millions were stunted because all the gifts of life were so cheap that they could not be sold! They had invented these infernal paradoxes by an over-reaching greed and too much craftiness.

Out of the despair they had made in the hearts of peoples evil forces were on the move, passions were stirring in great populations, men talked of war again, fifteen years after a world-war in which the flower of youth had been mown down and all ideals had gone into the mud. The munition-workers were getting busy again. The *Comité des Forges* was earning new dividends. And the youth of the world, who would be the victims of the next massacre, were being duped and doped by the intoxicant of flaming oratory, calling again to national pride and national passion, promising a way out of despair by tanks and aeroplanes, and a way to prosperity along the road to ruin. They were setting up new tyrannies in the name of patriotism, denouncing liberty for the sake of power, exalting the bully over the man of intelligence and the ape-man over the artist and the poet. Youth—bewildered and ignorant—without work and without hope—listened to these spellbinders and hailed them as heroes. *Heil Hitler!*

Armand Gatières took off his boots and let them drop heavily on to the boards of his bedroom in an old English house. His heart was heavier than his boots. Had he been wrong all this time? Had he dedicated his spirit to a falsity? Was he, after all, as Yvonne had called him, a traitor to France?

His pillow felt hard in an English bed. He tossed in his sleep and once cried out the name of his wife, Yvonne.

## XLV

He had a strange letter from Otto von Menzel. He read it many times before he tore it up and let it flutter into a ditch somewhere in Sussex a mile away from his sister's home.

*My dear friend (wrote Otto, that German comrade, that brother of Ina), I have often been thinking of you lately, and wondering what you think about all these strange events in Germany.*

*I am sure you have been bewildered, and perhaps dismayed. To the outside world it must seem as though we had all gone mad.*

*And that is, in a way, true. We are not normal. I admit that. As you know, we have not been quite normal for many years. Now the whole of Germany is uplifted by an emotion which is inexplicable to outside minds. There is something mystical in it, something as old and deep as racial spirit, something beyond and above reason. I, who have always been liberal, pacifist, international, have been swept away by this tide of emotion, by this extraordinary sense of unity and racial inspiration. I stretch out my arm and shout, "Heil Hitler!" and then am ashamed of myself, and then weep, and then shout again, "Heil Hitler!" He is the man whom I have called a madman, a spellbinder, a play-actor. He is the man whom I have derided and hated. And now I stretch out my arm which wears an armband with the sign of the Swastika, and I shout, "Heil Hitler!"*

*How can I explain this to you? I cannot! It is beyond explanation. It is something to do with the agonies, the humiliations, the poverty, the despair of the German people. Hitler promises us a way of escape, a new hope, a new adventure, a glorious future beyond all this misery. We seem already to have got beyond misery, to be enjoying that sense of glory. It is perhaps an illusion. It is perhaps a madness. Nevertheless, it is pleasant to be mad in that way. It is better than being sane with the realization of an abominable state of things. But how can I explain? I cannot!*

*It has something to do with fear, which has now been killed. We were afraid of ourselves. We were afraid of dark forces moving within us. We were hopelessly divided into political groups, each heavily armed against the other, each inflamed with hatred against the other. We were afraid of Communism creeping up and destroying us, as Russia was destroyed. It was a real fear. It was justified. And there was the constant fear of revolution from the Right, by the Stahlhelm, the army of the old order, the army of the Junker mind, or from the Left, by the Reichsbanner and the Communists. We were murdering each other, bludgeoning each other. There was an epidemic of suicide. The German mind was distracted.*

Now, by some miracle—God knows how it happened—we have come together under the spell of this strange man Hiller, this builder's labourer, this Austrian corporal, who, perhaps, has no quality, except some flame in his spirit which touches his lips. Even his words have no meaning if one reads them. I admit that. They seemed to me nonsense. But he calls somehow to one's German soul. I have been in a hall where twenty thousand people listened to him. I do not think they knew very much what he was saying. But men about me, old and young, wept. They jumped to their feet and shouted themselves hoarse. He is a German Pan who plays on magic pipes. His words—the sounds that come from his lips—stir one, making something cold touch one's spine, take one back to a primitive sense of race and dream memories.

This mass emotion which he has stirred catches hold of one, makes one part of it. It is not intellectual. It is a matter of instinct, of emotion, of passion which is not ignoble. It is a sense of comradeship. It is a sense of brotherhood. It knocks out snobbishness, class consciousness, differences of age and sex. We feel our German spirit intermingled. It is Germany which has awakened. It is the German tribes gathered together in one great camp. Something moves in us, something terrific, old, beautiful, and yet new. We are not looking back, we are looking forward. We are not going to hark back to the old order and the old tradition, but the German people, acting together, inspired by this wonderful unity of spirit, is going to march forward to a new world, to a new adventure.

My dear friend, my dear Armand, the lover of my sister Ina, you will not understand this. Nothing that I can write will make you understand, because I do not understand myself. I only know that I shout, "Heil Hitler!" with all my countrymen. And Hitler is a symbol, a trumpet-note, a tune on the Panpipes. He is not merely a little man with a toothbrush moustache. He is like a musician who perhaps is ugly, stupid, weak, ill-dressed, ridiculous, but who plays his instrument in a way which makes one see lovely things, which brings tears into one's eyes, and raises one's hopes above the earth. To such a musician one gives applause. Women fling flowers at him. So it is with Hitler.

*There have been brutalities. There will be more. Young bullies are about. It is a social revolution in which there will be evil as well as good. I hate this persecution of the Jews, although some of the Jews—like many of the Christians—were not agreeable people—the purveyors of obscenity, the hirers of naked women in the cabarets down the Friedrichstrasse. I hate a bully spirit. I hate intolerance. I believe in peace. I love France. But I am caught up by this spiritual communion of the German race. It is marvellous. It is irresistible. But it is not, I hope, a menace to France or to Europe. We are setting our own house in order. We are welding ourselves together. We have a spiritual purpose and policy which will be hostile to the tyranny of the machine, the greed of big industrialists, the cruelty of the Communists, the craft and cunning of the usurers, but not hostile to civilization or to world peace, or to the brotherhood of youth.*

*My dear friend, my French hero, my comrade, this letter will seem a little mad. As I say, that is true. But there is such a thing as a splendid madness. Germany is possessed by it. Pardon the brutalities which have happened and may happen. Do not believe that they represent the splendour or the idealism of this German awakening.*

Armand read this strange letter several times before he tore it into small pieces and let it drop into the ditch.

Otto von Menzel had gone mad. Armand had greatly loved him.

## XLVI

A week after the arrival of that letter Armand was in Düsseldorf and in the room of Gustav Hoffmann. Lucille had tried to dissuade him from going to Germany, but he said that he must go. He wanted to see into the heart of this madness. He wanted to get at the facts for himself. He was convinced—he clung to the hope—that in a great nation like Germany there was still some sanity and liberal thought.



"We must try to understand," he told Lucille. "Without understanding we cannot get into touch with the German mind again. Somewhere there must be a mind. German youth is not a generation of devil-worshippers. They have generous impulses. I have had thousands of letters from young Germans who are perfectly intelligent."

"Before the arrival of the Nazis, before the triumph of Hitler," said Lucille. "I implore you not to go, Armand!"

He went. He felt an urgent call to go. Here he was in the room of Gustav Hoffmann's printing business in Düsseldorf, from which his friend had issued his paper *Der Friede*, which was now suppressed.

They had talked for hours. Hoffmann was in despair. Many of his Jewish friends and relatives had fled. His wife and children had gone to Paris. He was alone in his house, winding up his business.

"I shall have to go," he said. "It is too dangerous here. I am surprised they haven't beaten me to death."

"You have many friends in Düsseldorf," said Armand. "They know you. They love you."

Hoffmann shrugged his shoulders.

"I am a Jew, my dear friend. I am also a pacifist. My young men have gone over to Hitler. As I told you, the human mind—perhaps only the German mind—is incapable of progress. We have failed, my dear sir. Let me make you a cup of tea."

Armand watched him making the tea on a small stove. He noticed that his shoulders drooped. Some vitality had gone out of him. His eyes were heavily puffed. His skin had gone grey.

"We have failed for a time, Hoffmann," said Armand. "But I still believe in the possibility of intelligence operating over the destiny of men. If we do not believe that, it is the final surrender. It is the end of our civilization. German youth will wake up after this nightmare, out of this illusion. They will co-operate to defend Europe. We shan't see that

next war—you and I! We are moving inevitably towards a closer association of peoples for common protection against the forces of destruction."

"It's a mad world," answered Hoffmann. "There is no hope."

He listened for a moment to some noise on the stairs, and his grey skin went white. There was a look of fear in his eyes. He stood with a silver teapot in his hand and spilt a little tea on his bare boards.

"What is that?" asked Armand, rising from his chair.

It was the noise of tramping feet. The room was invaded by young men in brown shirts with the sign of the Swastika on their left arms.

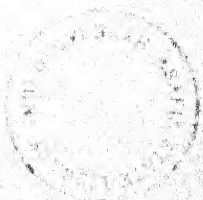
"There is the old Jew-dog!" shouted one of them.

"Stand back there!" said Armand sternly. "What do you want?"

They wanted Gustav Hoffmann, who was a Jew and a pacifist.

Armand Gatières had worked for peace, but he defended his friend as once in time of war he had stood in the château of Vermelles, swinging a marble Venus. Now he had no weapon but a chair, and that was smashed aside. A heavy stick struck him on the forehead and blotted out everything so far as he was concerned with life.

THE END



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